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VICTIM SOULS

VICTIM SOULS

A Doctrinal Essay

by

The Abbé Paulin Giloteaux

Translated from the French

by

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AUTHOR'S DEDICATION

TO

S THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS

PATTERN OF SPIRITUAL VICTIMS

AND TO

ALL "LITTLE SOULS" WHOSE LONGING

IS TO FOLLOW HER IN THE

VICTIM WAY

Acc. 4719

INTRODUCTION

IN venturing to approach the theme of "victim souls" we find ourselves immediately on difficult and most delicate ground.

The twenty years just past have seen a plentiful output of both books and pamphlets dealing with, and throwing not a little light upon, the subject; but, to our mind, there still remain abundant dangers for persons in the world, and even for consecrated souls, in the discussion of a spiritual state of such sublimity, and, still more, in aspiring to it insufficiently supplied with data or with supernatural enlightenment.

There are generous souls, indeed, whose eager spirit of adventure where things religious are concerned is oftener the indication of a temperament alive with natural energy than the effect of solid and enlightened piety. Fired, by the reading of some edifying book or by some glimpse of a magnificent ideal, with superficial enthusiasm, depending less on reason and the will than on imagination and on sensibility, they hasten forward, insufficiently prepared, towards those lofty heights which should be mounted only with the utmost caution and discretion. Souls such as these go frequently astray because they have not adequately gauged their personal powers nor searched into the laws of supernatural life. After a few abortive efforts to attain the exalted regions of the spirit, they grow

discouraged by the difficulties which they encounter, and, sooner or later, give up their attempt, despairing of arriving at a goal which they have aimed at unadvisedly and with no competent direction. Some, conquered by aversion and a prey to scruples, and others weary and discouraged, rest motionless and barren of all spiritual fruit, having at one time raised the brightest hopes. And others, sadder still, dazed and bewildered at some critical moment, fall into serious failings and distressing lapses, and even into scandals, all the more mischievous through being caused by pious persons with a character for being far advanced towards perfection. All this because, instead of working quietly, in the present, at their spiritual advancement, they fixed their hopes and their ambitions on ideals beyond their reach, sometimes indeed upon illusions, glimpsed in a shadowy future and having no connection either with their personal capacities or God's designs. These are grave dangers, and it is well to draw attention to them.

On the other hand, contrasted with the souls who launch themselves with such imprudence into these difficult ways, stand certain mediocre spirits, creatures of habit, timorous or self-satisfied, cased in an armour of conventionality and taking fright at the suggestion of the slightest deviation from the beaten track adhered to by the masses of the faithful. Speak to such persons of "the victim soul," and instantly you have them up in arms, loud in their protests and eager to do battle with so-called innovations, all the more dangerous, in their eyes, through sheltering beneath the cloak of piety. Unhappily, too many voices—which should be speaking with authority—

join in this random dogmatizing, without sufficient information or any serious investigation of the subject, blaspheming that of which they have no knowledge, proscribing what they should commend, and, thoroughly prejudiced regarding everything connected with the spiritual life, dissuading faithful souls from the performance of their duty instead of showing them the way to light and truth. And so they frequently oppose themselves directly to the Holy Spirit, who may be calling souls to leave the ordinary track, that he may lead them onwards to the state of being saviours and redeemers.

A question may be delicate and difficult, but that is not a reason for despising it and combating it *à priori;* rather, because it is so big with weighty consequences, it demands most careful study and investigation. That such mistaken talk and injudicious acts may be avoided, we here attempt to state the case of victim souls.

It seems that in these present days of spiritual, ascetical and mystical revival, when so many souls, called by the Holy Spirit, are mounting in a wonderful way towards the summits of the spiritual life, God has elected to make ready for himself a host of chosen souls prepared to battle with those powers of evil encroaching ever more and more upon a world athirst for pleasure and heading straight for paganism. For in the darkest hours of this world's history, when godlessness is rife or immorality parades itself before men's eyes, it pleases God to summon certain souls to sacrifice themselves, freely, in imitation of the Crucified, for the advantage of the Church and the salvation of the world. He visits them with

sorrows and afflictions, trials and sufferings, physical, moral and supernatural, inviting them in secret, by his grace, to reproduce within themselves the state of the Redeemer's Soul throughout his Passion, so causing them to be, like Jesus, mediators, expiating and atoning.

This survey has been undertaken specially for such souls—and during the last quarter of a century the number of them has become considerable—who, often unaware of their potentialities, seek vainly for the course they should pursue, and also for those others who are conscious of being drawn by a desire for reparation to a loftier spiritual plane, for victim states are but the highest level of the life of reparation.

Keeping before our eyes the interests of souls as well as the importance of sound spiritual doctrine, we enter these domains with caution and discretion, but also without fear or trepidation, guarding the golden mean between extravagant enthusiasm on the one hand and excessive reticence upon the other, for it is of the first importance, when dealing with a complex subject such as this, to have a judgement neither too inaccessible nor too easily swayed, but rather to think soberly and to express the truth with careful accuracy.

And further, that no aspect of the question may be left obscure, and that the subject may be seen in all its fulness while yet remaining within reach of every grade of intellect, we shall pursue a system under which the subject-matter will be studied in three separate parts, each part composed of several chapters. The first of these divisions will contain a survey of the historical and dogmatic aspect of our subject, the second will examine it from the dogmatic

and the moral standpoints, and the third will deal with the ascetic and the mystical implications of the question.

The plan will be as follows:

Part I

Historical and Dogmatic Survey

1. Sacrifice and Victim in the Old Testament.
2. The Great Victim of the New Testament.
3. Victims in the Church.

Part II

Dogmatic and Moral Survey

1. The victim spirit in the Church.
2. The state and function of the victim.
3. The approaches to the victim state.
4. The victim vocation and vow.

Part III

Ascetical and Mystical Survey

1. The attitude of the victim soul.
2. The weapons of the victim soul.
3. The prayer of the victim soul.
4. The crosses of the victim soul.
5. The devotions of the victim soul.

In all, twelve chapters, which we shall try to keep concise, and which, at any rate in our intention, will

be informed by a supernatural and entirely Catholic spirit.

May God the Holy Spirit guide and supervise our work, and may the faithful who are called to deeper love of Jesus Christ follow us through the description of these ways, painful and difficult indeed, but which, illuminated by the Heavenly light, lead upwards to the loftiest peaks of sanctity.

P. G.

ROME, FOURMIES, VALENCIENNES,
1920-1922.

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PART I

HISTORICAL AND DOGMATIC SURVEY

CHAPTER I

SACRIFICE AND THE VICTIM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

NOUGHT here below has any existence save for the glory of God; a fundamental truth ignored too often and even at times rejected by mankind, when it should be the guiding principle of men's lives.

But this elementary truth may be presented in two different ways, for there exist in God two different kinds of glory—on the one hand an intrinsic or essential glory, which is infinite, inalienable, incapable of either increase or diminution, inherent in the eternal essence of God—on the other hand extrinsic or accidental glory, rendered to him by creatures summoned out of nothingness by God himself expressly for this purpose. *Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus*—"The Lord hath made all things for himself."[1]

It is, however, noteworthy that there are certain of his creatures who must glorify him of necessity; such are the stars revolving overhead and other creatures without reasoning powers, which witness, by their blind obedience to the laws which govern them, to the omnipotence of God. *Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei et opera manuum ejus annuntiat firmamentum*—"The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands," says the Psalmist.[2]

But glory such as this is wholly insufficient for the

[1] Prov. xvi, 4. [2] Ps. xix, 2.

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satisfying of his claims. Fixed beings which unconsciously contribute to the Heavenly glory are, so to speak, no more than pages of a perfectly illuminated book, honouring him who planned it and created it, provided only that there are other beings in existence able to read it and appreciate its beauty. These other beings are the rational orders of creation, angels and men, able, by virtue of their reason, to discern the harmony of the universe and give God the praise.

Man, in particular, whose nature, both material and spiritual, makes of him the epitome of all creation, raised to the supernatural order and made aware, by revelation, of the Divine perfections, becomes, *ipso facto,* capable of giving glory to the Author of all that is. He gives it freely, yielding his will to the divine and human laws which govern him, and, further, rendering to God, by virtue of religion, the honour due to him as the Creator. As creature he is bound to acknowledge outwardly the fact of his dependence upon God, and if he finds expression of it in a special way by means of prayer, he will attain to his most solemn recognition of it through what is known as sacrifice. So let us look at what is meant by sacrifice, that we may learn how best to glorify Almighty God.

* * * * *

Sacrifice, in its primitive sense, is the act by which man makes acknowledgement of God's supreme dominion over him. Convinced that his existence is a Heavenly favour depending wholly on the will of his Creator, man tries, by means of a specific act, to express his certainty that God in truth possesses powers of life and death over himself.

Whether this root idea of sacrifice is limited to offerings and gifts or whether it includes the supplementary idea of immolation and destruction is matter for dispute among the theologians. Certain of these have held that the essential element of sacrifice lay in the offering of a gift acceptable to God, and that destruction of the gift was nothing more than the expression and the symbol of the offering; but we believe—conforming to tradition and relying on the evidence of history—that *sacrifice demands destruction.*

In every age and every land man has experienced the need of witnessing to his dependence on Almighty God, not only by oblation but also by immolation. We learn from Holy Scripture that the sons of Adam offered sacrifices in the earliest days: Noë no sooner leaves the Ark than he erects an altar for burnt-offerings of slaughtered victims; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, in the course of their religious life, repeat the action, Moses, the mighty law-giver of the Hebrew people, sanctions, in turn, with his authority, the Israelitish sacrifices, of which the greater part are sacrifices of immolation.

The upholders of the theory of "gift-sacrifice" will doubtless answer that the notion of "destructive sacrifice" does not emerge till after sin's appearance. To this we are unable to agree. Were Adam never to have sinned, the bounden duty of humanity would still have been to offer sacrifice to the Creator, a sacrifice at once latreutic, eucharistic, and impetratory—latreutic, or of adoration, protesting its dependence upon God; eucharistic, or of thanksgiving, proving its gratitude for benefits received; impetrative or of supplication, to sue for further favours—and it is hard to see why such a sacrifice, performed in a state

of innocence, should not have had included in it, after offering, destruction of the victim.

The dominating principle in the essence of sacrifice lies not in the idea of making gifts to God, as though the Creator were expected to take pleasure in the offering of an object which himself has lent us, but in the full and perfect recognition of his sovereignty. Doubtless he is most worthy to receive the firstfruits of the harvest and the first-born of his creatures, but, most of all, he claims of us acknowledgement that of his goodness only he has given us life, reserving to himself the unrestricted right to extend or take it back precisely when and how he wills, allowing us no voice in his decrees. Now this conception of an absolute sovereignty, with powers of life and death, can find no possible expression in an offering alone, but must involve destruction. Therefore, in sacrifice there must be immolation.

This element is all the more essential since the commission of sin. If man, before the Fall, were bound already to the offering of sacrifices—latreutic, eucharistic, and impetrative—sin once committed, he would find himself obliged to add a fourth note to his sacrifice, a penitential character of satisfaction, expiation, and propitiation; of satisfaction, to repair the outrage offered; of expiation, to obtain forgiveness of the sin; and of propitiation, to return anew to favour with the Creator.

And such an attitude appears to be but logical.

For would not man, already in a state of nothingness by virtue of his creaturehood, deserve for his offence against his God to be deprived of that existence which he had employed for the insulting of his Benefactor? Was it too much to expect him to repair

his crime of treason towards God by immolation of his life? The immeasurable greatness of his guilt demanded of the sinner the utmost he was capable of offering in the way of expiation, that is, the penalty of death itself. Regarded thus, sacrifice, whether before or after sin, seems to be dominated by this root conception of destruction, alone expressing recognition of God's absolute lordship over us and our dependence upon him.

And this idea of sacrifice may be defined still more explicitly. The first conception (that of immolation) is followed by a second, that of *substitution,* for if God claims from man performance of his duties with regard to worship, thanksgiving, petition and expiation, he nevertheless remains unwilling that the blood of man should flow upon the altar. Indeed, for the avoidance of such blood-shedding, he gave directions, to be found in the Old Testament, for offerings of lower creatures in man's stead; and, that they might more closely represent him, they must be chosen from amongst those things most nearly touching man's existence—his foodstuffs, such as bread and wine, and those domestic animals connected intimately with his daily life. These substitutes were offered and destroyed—immolated—sacrificed—and, if they were unable to satisfy completely the demands of Yahweh,[1] they had at least the merit of foreshowing and preparing for the coming Sacrifice of the New Testament, that Sacrifice of Jesus upon Calvary which only could be pleasing to the Creator.

But here we are anticipating—and it is well to note that the conception (taken as a whole) of sacrifice cannot be limited by these two primary ideas of

[1] The Hebrew name for God.

destruction and of substitution. Religion, as the derivation of the word denotes,[1] implies an intercourse, a union, relationship between created and Creator, and, taking sacrifice as the most perfect manifestation of the virtue of religion, it need be no surprise to find the idea of *covenant* enshrined within that of sacrifice. In fact, because man, humbling himself, adores, makes reparation, and endeavours after sinning to regain God's favour, God, for his part, inclines with tenderness towards his creature and consents not only to vouchsafe forgiveness, but also to resume with man their first relationship. This is apparent in the Old Testament story, especially at the highest and most solemn moments of the Jewish Patriarchal life.

When, in his wrath at the corruption of the human race, God had destroyed the great majority of creatures in the deluge, the few survivors, as an earnest of their thankfulness and loyalty, turned to him with the offering of a sacrifice. Noë, as we have seen, set up an altar and slaughtered many victims; and God, for his part, willing to show how perfectly his anger was appeased, made and confirmed a covenant with Noë, promising that in future man should never again be punished by a deluge, but should be visited instead by fire or by some other form of chastisement. The rainbow, with the appearance of a link connecting heaven with earth and earth with heaven, became the symbol of God's covenant with his creature and of the creature's covenant with God.

Again, when Abraham, the chosen of God to be the founder of the Jewish nation, offered a sacrifice to

[1] *Religare,* to bind.

Yahweh as a token of his thankfulness, the Almighty made a covenant with him in turn.[1]

A similar pact distinguishes the entry into the promised land. After the Red Sea passage Moses immolated victims, and taking the blood of beasts, sprinkled it on the altar, representing God, and on the people of the Hebrews, solemnly declaring: "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you."[2] This, in a sense, then, was the Old Covenant between Yahweh and his people, signed in the blood of victims, the provisional covenant which should later pass away and be replaced by the New Covenant at the Cenacle and on Calvary. For, as the Gospel tells us, Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, "took bread and blessed and broke and gave to his disciples and said: Take ye and eat. This is my Body. And taking the chalice, he gave thanks and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my Blood of the new Testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins."[3] Here was the final covenant at last, to be perpetuated in the Blood of the Lamb, at Catholic Altars, down the ages.

Finally, to the three conceptions of destruction, substitution and covenant, another must be added, that of communion or of man's direct participation in the sacrifice. In common with the other three, we find it manifested in the ceremonial of the ancient faith. On certain days, for certain special reasons, the victims sacrificed upon the Jewish altar were not completely burned. A portion was reserved for the consumption of the faithful, who were to eat it after preparation by fasting and liturgical prayer.

[1] Gen. xv, 18. [2] Exod. xxiv, 8. [3] Matt. xxvi, 26-28.

And so the perfect concept of the sacrifice appears: the offering and destruction of a victim as substitute for man the sinner, in adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation; containing the tremendous boon of the formation of a covenant between earth and Heaven, and so enabling man, when he has sinned, to come back into touch with his Creator.

* * * * *

And now to penetrate still further, into the very heart and centre of our subject. That which concerns us here is not the sacrifice itself so much as that which is the matter of the sacrifice. And this is not to imply that all the foregoing considerations have been valueless, for it would be impossible to understand the meaning of the victim unless we had first grasped the whole significance of sacrifice. This, as we have seen already, is a religious ceremony, through which humanity renders glory to God. Yet it must never be forgotten that whereas three things are necessary for the performance of a sacrifice—that is to say, an altar, priest, and victim—it is the third of these, the victim, which is of primary importance. Without a victim, priest and altar would be meaningless, the offering of a sacrifice would be impossible. Hence the importance of the victim.

The victim is the central point of all religion, the link connecting Heaven and earth, the place of meeting between human and Divine. The victim is the means whereby humanity sends up to God its worship, thankfulness, petitions, and expiation, and through the victim, God, moved and his wrath appeased, sends down upon man those graces of forgiveness and of sanctification which should bring him to his goal.

We need not, therefore, be astonished at the value set upon the victim. As, in the Old Testament, religion was the mainspring of the Israelitish life and centred itself in sacrifice, it plainly follows that the victim, the matter of the sacrifice, was held to be the pivot round which the Jewish nation turned.

Historical research into the place of sacrifice establishes the fact that in the earliest times, before the Jewish nation had been constituted or even organised officially, the sacrifice was offered in the open, anywhere, even an altar sometimes being dispensed with. Nevertheless, when Moses had achieved the codifying of his laws, the Tabernacle, like a tent erected in the desert, became the centre of all Jewish ceremonial.

In fact, the Temple at Jerusalem was but a Tabernacle reproduced in stone, and, like the Tabernacle, was divided into three: the Court, the Sanctuary or Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies, one beyond the other. In the Court, to which the faithful had access, was placed the altar of burnt-offerings, upon which the immolation of the victims was accomplished, and where the sacred fire was always kept alight. The Sanctuary proper, accessible only to the priests, contained the loaves of proposition, the seven-branched candlestick, and the altar of incense, where daily, in the morning and the evening, was burnt an offering of incense, ascending towards Heaven as a pleasing savour. Enshrined within the Holy of Holies stood the ark of the covenant, containing Aaron's blossoming rod, some of the manna gathered in the wilderness, and the two tables of the law, and over the ark two carven cherubim upheld a golden covering called the propitiatory, regarded as the throne or mercy-seat of God; being, so to speak, the tribune

where his Presence dwelt and whence proceeded his decrees, his oracles and favours.

We have already seen that all the ceremonies of the Jewish worship were presented in the Temple, according to the ordinance of Moses. The greater part of them were sacrifices, and these might take the form of bloody and unbloody sacrifices.

Unbloody sacrifices were themselves of two descriptions, determined by the nature—solid or liquid—of the offerings. Under the former heading came the offerings of wheat, taking the form of crushed and roasted ears, or bread, either leavened or unleavened, sometimes sprinkled with the oil of olives to which was added a small quantity of incense and of salt, commemorating the eternal covenant concluded between Yahweh and his people at the beginnings of the Jewish nation. Wine, in libations poured upon the altar or in the Sanctuary, formed the second category.

The bloody sacrifices, which composed the greater part of Israelitish worship, consisted of four kinds: the holocaust, the sacrifice for sin, the sacrifice for trespass, and the peace-offering.

The holocausts were offerings to God of victims slain and totally destroyed by fire, and were the most perfect sacrifice of all.[1] They were a striking witness to God's sovereign domination over man, since the destruction of the victim was complete.

The sin and trespass offerings were atoning sacrifices; the former offered by the individual in reparation for his personal sins, the latter by the nation, in expiation of the common guilt. In these two offerings the immolated victims were not totally consumed

[1] *Holocaust,* in the Greek, signifies wholly burned.

upon the altar. Only the fat was burned there, the remainder being thrown upon the fire outside the Court, or else reverting to the priests, God as it were relinquishing his rights in favour of his ministers.

The peace-offering was both eucharistic and impetrative at once. As in the two foregoing sacrifices, the strangled victims were but partially consumed, a portion being put aside for those who made the offering, and here we find again the theory of communion contained in that of sacrifice.

The actual celebration of the sacrifices was continuous or very nearly so. The holocaust of a lamb, accompanied by a libation poured upon the altar, was offered twice a day to Yahweh, at morning and at evening.[1] And, in addition, on the sabbath—that is to say, on Saturday—the priests renewed the loaves of proposition, the morning and evening holocaust being further supplemented by the sacrificing of two lambs, accompanied by an offering and libation.[2]

At the beginnings of the months, timed by the moon's return, besides the daily sacrifices a special holocaust was made of two young bulls, a ram, seven lambs, and a young buck-goat.[3]

On great feasts, at the Phase, at Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Feast of Expiation, so many were the victims and so frequent were the sacrifices, that the blood ran down in torrents in the Temple. The Feast of the Phase, the Passover, or unleavened bread, commemorating the deliverance of the Hebrew nation at their coming out of Egypt,[4] coincided with the advent of the spring and harvest. It lasted seven days, during which time none but un-

[1] Exod. xxix, 38-42; Num. xxviii, 3-8.
[2] Num. xxviii, 9, 10. [3] Num. xxviii, 11-15. [4] Exod. xii.

leavened bread was eaten. On the eve of the first day —14th Nisan[1]—a lamb was sacrificed for every ten to twenty persons and consumed at home. An offering of the first sheaf of corn and of a lamb was made to Yahweh on the second day, and during the remainder of the octave, holocausts were offered and sacrifices made for sin.

The Feast of Pentecost,[2] of weeks,[3] or firstfruits,[4] fifty days later than the Passover or Phase, was the conclusion of the time of harvest. It lasted one day only, in the course of which two leavened loaves were offered, holocausts, sin-offerings, and two lambs, the latter immolated as the victims of the peace-offering.[5]

The Feast of Tabernacles was so called because, while keeping it, the Jewish people dwelt in shelters made of leafy boughs,[6] in memory of their sojourn in the desert, when they dwelt in tents. This feast was celebrated in the autumn, and became, as well, the feast of the harvest,[7] being kept with great rejoicings and many sacrifices.

No eating was permitted on the great fast day of the year, the Feast of Expiation, kept five days earlier. The High Priest, after washing ceremonially, put on the pontifical vestments and went alone into the Temple to officiate. There he offered a young bull, two rams, and two he-goats, for his own sins, those of the priests and of the people. One of the two goats, called the emissary goat, instead of being slaughtered, was driven out into the desert, bearing symbolically upon its head the sins of all the people. On this solemn day the High Priest went into the

[1] Deut. xvi, 6. [2] Acts ii, 1. [3] Deut. xvi, 10 ff.
[4] Num. xxviii, 26. [5] Lev. xxiii, 17, 19. [6] Lev. xxiii, 42.
[7] Deut. vi, 13; Exod. xxiii, 16.

Holy of Holies to sprinkle the propitiatory, the throne of Yahweh's might,[1] with blood of immolated victims.

* * * * *

These, roughly outlined, are the principal ideas connected with the worship of the Jews. It is unnecessary to expand them further, since their value to the subject which we have in hand is purely retrospective. Moreover, all Old Testament victims fade into the distant shadows of the ages long since gone, and lose themselves behind the Cross on Golgotha. We hasten, then, to close this chapter with a summary of our conclusions.

As we asserted at the outset, nothing here below has any existence save for the glory of God, and man is able to give God this glory principally by virtue of religion, expressing itself most forcibly through sacrifice.

Sacrifice is an act of worship, and by this act a victim, as a substitute for man, is immolated to express our consciousness of our dependence upon God. The act contains within itself four principal ideas—viz., substitution, destruction, covenant, communion, which complement each other and together tend towards man's justifying and the glory of the Almighty. Offered with four intentions: adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation, it wins in return, for man, the graces of forgiveness and of sanctification necessary to his salvation.

In the Old Testament the matter offered in the unbloody sacrifices took the form of corn and wine and oil, of incense and of salt, and, in the bloody sacrifices, of domestic animals, which, to be acceptable to

[1] Lev. xvi-xxiii, 27-32; Num. xxix, 7-11.

the Lord, must needs conform to certain definite conditions of integrity and purity. They must be chosen from amongst those creatures sacrificed by Abraham of old—that is to say, the ram or lamb, the he-goat, ox or calf, the turtle dove or pigeon.

But all these gifts, the bread and wine especially, as well as the paschal lamb, the eating of which, according to Mosaic rite, was in a sense communion, were but far distant figures of the One Great Victim under the New Testament: that Victim who, by his Sacrifice of infinite worth, should render in superb degree to God the honour which is due to him as the Creator and which a sinful, impotent humanity was powerless to offer him in all its fulness.

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT VICTIM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

WE have already seen that immolation formed a part of the idea of sacrifice. Indeed, this concept was so firmly rooted in the pagan mind that heathen races offered to their idols not only holocausts of beasts but human sacrifices in addition.

Even Semitic peoples, other than the Hebrews, destroyed their new-born children as an offering to Baal and Astarté, and the Phœnicians followed a like custom. Causing the brazen image of their idol, Moloch, to be made white-hot, they cast into its arms young children, soon to perish of their burns. In Rome, there was a period when, on the strength of an ambiguous oracle of Apollo, the goddess Mania, mother of the household gods, was offered human sacrifices, and every year, at Carthage, the blood of a Carthaginian citizen was spilt upon the altar. And so, throughout the whole of the pagan world the human sacrifice appears. It seems that all humanity, in spite of errors and idolatry, still kept the Fall in mind and felt the need of bloody reparation.

The literature of Greece preserved not only the memorial of our sorrowful beginnings, but also some remembrance of the promise of redemption. The story of Prometheus, dramatised by Æschylus, recalls this theory that a superhuman being is essential to atone for the transgressions of the world and satisfy

the claims of the Creator. The legend of the fettered Titan is familiar—bound to a rock while a rapacious eagle tears his liver, which ever grows again in order that he may endure fresh torments. "Think not," says Hermes to him in the tragedy, "that your distress will end until a god is willing to descend from realms of light to suffer in your stead." What other meaning can this have than that the spirit of the ancient world, in spite of the corruption of the primitive revelation made by God to Adam, was anxiously awaiting the appearing of a Saviour?

The same idea is found again in the *Antigone* and in the *Œdipus Rex* of Sophocles. Euripides, who follows him in the illustrious line of Greek tragedians, maintains and carries on the same tradition. His Iphigenia is the classic type of the unblemished soul offered in substitution for her native land. Though, in his play, the innocent victim, like another Isaac, escapes the actual sacrifice, a hind being substituted for her through the miraculous intervention of the goddess Artemis, the thought existed, nevertheless, and everywhere the expectation of a mediating victim, combining in himself the adorations and the expiations of the human race, was making itself felt.

This need of an ideal victim reappears amongst the most ancient peoples known to history. The Zarathustra of the Persians, sent by Ormuzd to do battle with Ahriman; the Buddha of the Indians, choosing to suffer that he might deliver men from a transitory existence and conduct them to Nirvana; the Osiris of the Egyptians, dying and rising from the grave, are they not types foreshadowing the Saviour on the Cross?

Surrounded by the heathen tribes, the Jews alone

were free from these mistaken notions, for human sacrifice and idol-worship were prohibited by God. Before the ordering of Aaron's priesthood, God had certainly decreed that every first-born of the family and flock should be reserved and set apart for him, but even so, the manner of their consecration was dissimilar. The first-born of the family were dedicated to the priesthood, whereas the young of beasts were offered up in sacrifice. And later, when their special functions were officially allotted to the Levites, parents were even allowed to redeem their first-born. Thus Mary, on the day of Presentation in the Temple, offers two turtle-doves in place of Jesus for his liberation.

Therefore, in Israel, the sacrifices are of vegetable, mineral, and animal offerings only, never of human victims. In all the bloody ceremonies the animals were presented to the sacrificing priest, who burned them as a holocaust. What better means could be devised for giving them to the Almighty, since fire (most subtle of all elements) in seizing on the victims transformed them into its very substance and swept them upwards with itself towards heaven?

Whatever may be thought about these legends and historical facts, the truth remains that all these hecatombs, whether of human beings (among the heathen) or of beasts (among the Hebrews) were insufficient to give glory to God or to atone for the offences of the world. To offer adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation worthily a victim must be found who, by his own transcendency and guiltlessness, would be acceptable to God and capable of finding favour in his sight. As we shall see hereafter it was even necessary, in order that the claims of

justice might be satisfied, that a God-Man should offer himself as Sacrifice, to give an infinite value to his immolation. This God-Man has appeared in Jesus Christ, the One Great Victim of the New Testament, who by his death has glorified the Father and at the same time saved humanity from everlasting death. Well may we pause before this figure of ideal perfection, endeavouring to discern how deep and fruitful is his love.

* * * * *

It may be said at once that the Redeeming Christ was the obsession of Old Testament writers, since the Messiah-King was looked upon, in Israel, as logical issue of the Mosaic worship and keystone of the Kingdom.

Already, in the dawning of the human race, the figure of Abel dying at his brother's hands remotely presages this Victim, while, at the first beginnings of the Jewish nation, Isaac, carrying the wood for his own sacrifice and then exposed upon the altar to die beneath his father's knife, awakens a presentiment of One who is to bear his Cross to Calvary and of the One Great Victim's immolation under the Father's curse.

Throughout the centuries, moreover, the prophets all foretell his coming, especially Isaias, who describes his sufferings in anticipation. We should reread that famous song, known as the "Poem of Yahweh's Servant," endeavouring the while to grasp its perfect beauty. "Behold my servant," says Isaias in the fifty-second chapter of his prophecy. "As many have been astonied at thee, so shall his visage be inglorious among men and his form among the sons

of men. . . . There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness, and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him. Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity : and his look was as it were hidden and despised. Whereupon we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows : and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities : he was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon him : and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way : and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth. He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth."[1]

Here is the Saviour's Passion unmistakably foreshown in its atoning character, and Calvary's Victim here appears synthetic of all victims and appointed to replace them all in the unparalleled Sacrifice of the Cross.

In the Old Testament, moreover, Yahweh had many a time complained of the inadequacy of the Mosaic sacrifices and of the narrowness of the Jewish people's mind, which lost itself in formalism and degraded its religion to the level of an outward, purely pharisaical cult. "What need have I of the blood of goats and heifers?"[2] Racine will ask one day in *Athalie,* voicing the thought of God the Father, spoken so often through the prophets' lips. Almighty

[1] Is. lii-liii, *passim.* [2] Ps. xlix, 9.

God no longer wanted victims of a day: he claimed instead the one Unique and Mighty Victim to be slain at Golgotha.

We need not therefore wonder when the Psalmist quotes these words which the Messiah will pronounce on coming into the world, and which S Paul will, in his turn, develop and enlarge upon. "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire" (such are the words of Jesus to the Father), "but a body hast thou prepared me. Burnt offering and sin offering thou didst not require: then said I: *Ecce venio*. Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart."[1] It was this law, indeed, which he was to fulfil in dying upon the Cross.

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We should be wrong, however, in supposing that his immolation lasted but a single day.

Theology indeed may show us the Messiah as the Eternal Priest charged with the offering to the Father of a Sacrifice most worthy of his greatness, but it declares as well that he is at the same time Victim, and Eternal Victim.

Victim he is from all eternity, since, as Eternal Priest, he offers himself to God the Father for the redemption of the human race. Victim he is on coming into the world, from the first moment of his Incarnation; as such he offers himself to God in his "*Ecce venio*." Again, he is Victim in his Mother's womb, awaiting there—almost, it may be said, impatiently—the hour of his immolation. And he is Victim at his

[1] Ps. xxxix, 7, 8, 9; Heb. x, 5, 6, 7.

Birth, since he has come to earth for the ascent of Calvary. He is a Victim when, but forty days appeared on earth, he publicly presents himself by the hands of his Mother in the Temple, as ransom for the sinner. In his hidden life he is Victim as he humbles and effaces and prepares himself by a perpetual renunciation for his redeeming act upon the Cross. And he is Victim at the outset of his public ministry, when he withdraws into the desert to do penance, becoming in anticipation the Victim of atonement. He is Victim still throughout his apostolic journeyings, because the purpose governing his life is ever God the Father's glory, and since it is the victim's function to procure that glory. But it is supereminently in his Passion that his Victim character appears in fullest splendour. The day which followed the consuming of the Paschal lamb saw his ascent of Calvary as Victim, there to be sacrificed; and at his Death, the veil of the Temple, rent asunder, shows by this marvel that the ancient law is done away and that his Sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation has met with the Almighty's favour.

It forms no part of our design to enter into all the sufferings of the Saviour here, but even without a detailed study of them we may assert with truth that he was brought by them to the extremity of agony. In less than eighteen hours he suffered in every portion of his human nature each kind of torment that imagination can evoke: physical tortures, mental anguish, moral agonies, and supernatural sufferings, which, as it were, joined forces to assail him simultaneously in order to destroy him. His honour wounded by outrageous insults; his soul by sorrow,

fear, and horror; his mind by the antagonism and the persecutions of all classes of society, men and women, Jews and Gentiles, priests and soldiers, great and small; his heart by the desertion of the disciples, the denial of S Peter, and the treachery of Judas; his body by the furrowing of the lashes in the scourging; his hands and feet transfixed by nails, his head tormented by the crown of thorns, his face disfigured with the marks of blows and spitting, his tongue consoled with vinegar, his ears affronted by abuse and cursing, his eyes made sorrowful by their beholding of his stricken Mother. Isaias says that he was "crushed" because of our iniquities, and strong as the expression is, it is not more than adequate for the portraying of the martyrdom of Jesus, consisting of appalling chaos in his being, a deep abyss of agony in his soul, a world of suffering in his body, drained of the last drop of his sacred blood.

His immolation still continues after he has died upon the Cross. As he was Victim in his lifetime, so he is Victim still and ever will be through eternity. His Sacrifice perpetuates itself in the Eucharistic sacrifice of Catholic altars, where the offering of Golgotha renews itself in mystic manner day by day, and will attain its glorious consummation in heaven, where S John, in the Apocalypse, shows us the Saviour under the aspect of a Lamb as it had been slain, in a sublime apotheosis amidst the ancients of the celestial city, Victim Unique of the Unique Great Sacrifice, presented by the only Priest who has found favour in the sight of God. For all the other victims of the other sacrifices offered by other priests are valueless, except through being incorporated with this Victim, their sacrifices mystically bound up with his

perfect Sacrifice, their human priests performing priestly functions by his authority alone. Thus he is Victim, Eternal and Unique, and in this character he dominates the ages. For, as Bossuet has said: "There is nothing greater in the Universe than Jesus Christ, and nothing in Jesus Christ is greater than his Sacrifice."

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Examining next the blest results of the Redeeming Sacrifice, we must observe its dual purpose: the rendering of glory to the Father and the saving of humanity from everlasting death.

That this magnificent immolation has given glory to God becomes apparent as soon as we have grasped that sacrifice is *always* to the Creator's glory. We need not dwell for long upon this truth, but we may well consider all the benefits which have accrued to man from the Redeeming Sacrifice throughout the centuries.

And here again the consequence is twofold: (1) a negative effect, exhibiting a satisfactory and atoning character; and (2) a positive effect, distinguished by its quality of restoration and deliverance. Jesus, by his Great Sacrifice, atones for all the offences of the world and satisfies the claims of Heavenly justice. He simultaneously delivers us from penalties imposed by God in consequence of the Fall and leads us back into the paths of holiness. In view of the ingratitude of man and the disorder brought into the world by our first parents' sin, it is a marvel of Divine compassion and a supreme achievement of an universal restoration.

The source of our descent is common knowledge. Adam, created in a state of holiness and bliss, falls

into grievous sin, and with him drags the whole of his posterity to disaster. Endowed, before his sin, with natural, preternatural, and supernatural gifts, he finds himself, in consequence of disobedience, with his nature in confusion, stripped of his preternatural privileges, his supernatural life destroyed. Thereafter all his nature is unbalanced and in permanent revolt, inflicting on him ceaseless toil and strife. His being, formerly immersed in light and peace, in happiness and immortality, is subject now to the obscurity of ignorance, irregularities of unlawful lusts, the sting of suffering and the horrors of death. He loses sanctifying grace and sees himself condemned to spiritual death, dividing him from God, his final end.

But this is not the whole of the calamity. That man should be severely punished is no more than justice, but that God should be so grossly outraged is an offence demanding reparation.

It is not necessary, here, to argue as to whether our redemption as it has subsequently been unfolded in the course of history was, in reality, essential for this reparation. Theology, it is true, informs us that God might have pardoned man without the Sacrifice of Golgotha, but it teaches also that, in order that the reparation made might be the equivalent of the insult offered, the sin committed did require the Incarnation. This truth is manifest to anyone who seriously weighs the gravity of sin. It may be argued that it is impossible for finite nature to commit an infinite offence; but wrong depends not only on the perpetrator, but also and more particularly on the person who receives it. A man may strike a peasant and a king; the act remains, in either case, the same, but in the second instance it becomes more serious in character than in

the first. And therefore Adam and Eve, in sinning, though their act was finite, caused infinite offence to God, because the outrage was directed towards a Being who is Infinite.

This principle established, it is evident that no created person could be capable of making reparation for the sin of Adam. The utmost satisfaction possible from a creature or from humanity as a whole, would still, because of its finite nature, remain inadequate as off-set to an infinite offence. For perfect reparation the homage offered and the injury done must be of equal magnitude: therefore it was essential after Adam's sin that one who was Divine should become Incarnate in order to make reparation for the world. And Jesus has performed this wonder. Clothing himself in human flesh, he takes our sins upon him and presents himself as Victim. Because there is in him one Person only, a Person gifted with two natures, this Person suffers and atones in his Humanity, but by reason of his Divinity gives to his Sacrifice a value which is infinite. Such is the plan of our Redemption: a God made Man, who suffers in his Humanity and yet, because of his Divinity, invests his sufferings with the quality of infinity.

Thus by his immolation Jesus pays for us the ransom of our sin, and like a generous benefactor who discharges for his subjects debts in whose contraction he has had no part, he offers an atonement equal to and even greater than the insult offered to God.[1] "O ineffable design!" S Anselm cries, in this connection. "The master meets the obligation which the servant has incurred! 'Tis I who have committed the iniquity and You, O Jesus, pay for me and

[1] S Thomas, part III, q. xlix, a. 4.

undergo my punishment!"[1] And how can we explain this wonder? The answer is that God is Love. Redemption, as unfolded to us, was indeed unnecessary. A God made angel, strictly speaking, might have saved the human race, and even with the Incarnation become actual fact, one drop of Jesus' Blood or one Tear only, could have sufficed to expiate our sins. But God, to whom the worlds are but as pieces on the board, sublime in all his operations, has chosen in his works to sound the utmost deeps of love. So Jesus gave himself both to his Father and to men, not grudgingly, but wholly and without reserve, even to death and that the death of the Cross.

Confronted with such love, we must henceforward realise the superabundant character of our Redemption. Just as the sins of men give God offence because they challenge him and morally attack his honour, so the Great Sacrifice of Jesus is supremely pleasing to the Father because, ascending, it attains directly to his essence. Moreover, in this homage God is affected not only in a purely moral manner as by sin, but intimately, personally, and physically (to use the philosophical terminology of the schoolmen), because the offering made in penitence and love is something appertaining to himself, and truly one with him in the Person of the Word. "A God humbled before a God!" Monsabré cries in contemplation of this mystery. "Here is a greater thing than all the outrages which creatures can invent. . . . Ah! not one redemption only, but thousands upon thousands do I see in this great overflow of sufferings and humiliations. All the transgressions of the human race, however monstrous and however shameful, are nothing

[1] S Anselm, *Orat.* ii, *P.L.* clviii, 860-861.

but a single drop of gall lost in the depths of this immeasurable ocean."[1]

But let us dwell no longer on this negative side of our redemption. If Jesus expiates the crimes of all the world, he also, at the same time, frees us from the slavery to which we were condemned, and this deliverance is for us a triple liberation, from sin, the penalties of sin and Satan.

And first of all he washes in his Blood the trespasses of all the world. Already, in his Apostolic journeyings, he exercised the purification of souls, remitting the offences of the prostitute, the woman taken in adultery, and numberless sick persons. And this to the scandal of the Jews, in the eyes of whom the Carpenter of Galilee, by acting thus, outran his rights and arrogated to himself the prerogatives of God. But Jesus had the power to pardon and remit the world's transgressions, and, using it before his death, he only did so in anticipation of his merits ultimately gained on Golgotha. So, without him, our sins would never have obtained remission. We might have expiated them by suffering and death, but we could never, of ourselves, have merited their pardon. His suffering was essential for the cleansing of our stains and our iniquities.

Jesus not only delivers us from sin, but also from the melancholy consequence of our first father's sin. We have already seen how Adam found his punishment when he had sinned, condemned to suffer in his soul the night of ignorance and the disorders of concupiscence, and in his body the distress of pain and tyranny of death. The question to be answered now is whether the Great Sacrifice of Calvary has re-estab-

[1] Lent, 1881, 49th Conference.

lished us in our original prerogatives—in other words, whether it has restored to us the preternatural gifts which Adam once enjoyed. At first sight it would seem that such is not the case, because humanity, after the drama of Golgotha has been enacted, continues still to stray amidst the grossest errors, yielding to evil, suffering, and dying, to the intense bewilderment of all those semi-Christian souls, according to whose conceptions a redemption, if of infinite value, should have restored humanity to its original status. But this is a delusion on their part, and minds which reason so have failed to discern the truth because they will not look upon the problem from the standpoint of eternity. Redemption does indeed deliver us from all these evils. Doubtless they actually remain to lie as a heavy burden on humanity, but yet an hour will come when ignorance and evil passions, suffering and death will be excluded from our life. This hour will come when time is at an end, and when eternity becomes our kingdom.

S Paul remarks with wisdom, taking up the saying of Osee : " For this corruption must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality . . . and when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written : O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"[1]

So Christ restores to us the preternatural gifts which Adam forfeited, and re-establishes us in our primitive dignity. Henceforward we may rest assured that the fair city of the future, free from sorrow or pain, which certain people of our day—misled by the desire for earthly joys—have visions of constructing,

[1] Osee xiii, 14; 1 Cor. xv, 55.

no longer is Utopian. One day it *will* exist, accomplished not according to their schemes by means of revolution and of hatred, but by the union of all souls in everlasting love. This will be heaven.

Finally, the Redeemer frees us also from the sovereignty of Satan, who since the fall of Adam has held us captive in his snares.[1] Jesus assures us of it in the Gospel, making it clear to us that he is indeed our Champion, sent to overthrow the angel of darkness. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out . . . because (he) is already judged,"[2] he says to his disciples. S Paul proclaims this truth in his Epistle to the Hebrews. Christ died for man that "he might destroy him who had the empire of death . . . and might deliver them who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to servitude."[3]

But this is still one aspect only of the problem. Jesus not only expiates our sins and frees us from our bonds, he also crowns his work by bringing back the human race into a supernatural state far higher than the state enjoyed by our first parents in the earthly paradise.

So overwhelmingly tremendous is the miracle that it is difficult to credit it. And yet it is indeed the fact, as the Apostle tells us in the Epistle to the Romans. As the first Adam gave us death in making us inheritors of sin, so the new Adam gives us back our life, restoring to us his resuscitating grace: "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound. That as sin had reigned to death; so also grace might reign by justice unto life everlasting."[4]

[1] S Thomas, part III, q. xlix, a. 11.
[2] Matt. xii, 29; Luke xi, 22; John xii, 31, xvi, 11.
[3] Heb. ii, 14-15.
[4] Rom. v.

This doctrine is reiterated by the Fathers of the Church. For them the act of Jesus is a second Creation, a renewal and a restoration. They vie with one another in affirming that the Christ came to this world to re-establish in us supernatural life and divinise our souls: "The Word by whom all things were made was able to restore them all," declares S Athanasius. "He has destroyed death and renewed in us his image. By means of his Incarnation he has made us gods, transforming us within and causing us to be the children, by adoption, of the Eternal Father."[1]

Here is the open door for our return to favour and to everlasting joys.[2] Adam was first created in a state of sanctity and happiness. We may regain that sanctity and retrieve that bliss; we only need employ the gifts bestowed upon us by the Saviour, and use the means which he has shown us to be necessary for our salvation.

The first of these is sanctifying grace, efficient agent of our divinisation, since grace within us is, according to the principles of Greek theology, the true indwelling of the Holy Trinity.

The second gift is the totality of actual graces or of general and particular aids which form, as it were, the fabric of our supernatural life and are intended to conduct us, step by step, towards our goal. The last gift is the glory, perfecting and finishing of grace in the hereafter, where we shall be possessed of God in the bliss of heaven. The words of Scripture and the dicta of Tradition together lead to this conclusion: that the Second Person of the Trinity became Incarnate to re-

[1] S Athanasius, *De Verbo Incarnato.*
[2] S Thomas, part III, q. xli, a. 5.

deem us; in other words, to save humanity, that he might raise it up to everlasting joy.

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In view of this great truth, how comprehensible becomes the rapture of the Church, on Holy Saturday, praising the infinite greatness of the Redeemer in the preface following the renowned "Exsultet!" In wondering love she even goes so far as to apostrophise the Fall as blessed. "O wonderful condescension of Thy mercy towards us!" so she cries to God the Father, "O inestimable affection of charity: that thou mightest redeem a slave, thou didst deliver up thy Son! O truly necessary sin of Adam, which was to be blotted out by the death of Christ! *O felix culpa!* O happy fault![1] which deserved to possess such and so great a Redeemer!"

Happy sin! because redemption is more than universal restoration. According to theology, it is a second exaltation of humanity, more splendid than the first. More excellent, also, in the sight of God, for, as the ransom paid by Jesus Christ was greater than the debt contracted, so is our actual state of supernatural life become by so much higher than the privileges granted to our first parents, and this sublimity of exaltation, begun on earth in grace, is afterwards extended in the light of glory for evermore in heaven.

Thus Jesus Christ, the great New Testament Victim, foreshown by Abel at the daybreak of the world, and then by Isaac at the Jewish nation's birth, proclaimed with increasing emphasis all through the history of the Hebrew people, by every prophet and

[1] S Thomas, part III, q. xli, a. 5.

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Isaiah in particular, and combining all Old Testament victims in himself, presents to God the Father, in his life and chiefly in the dolorous hours of his Passion, a Sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation. And, by his immolation of himself as Victim sacrosanct, he expiates the offences of the world, strikes off the chains which fetter sinful man, and leads him back, by paths of supernatural perfection, to everlasting life.

Nevertheless, men benefit by this miraculous Redemption only so far as they apply to themselves the merits of the Saviour on the Cross. Jesus indeed may ransom them, but they must also be co-operators in his immolation of himself, by prayer and sacrifice. "God cannot save our souls without our aid, and we cannot save them without his," says a well-known axiom, and so it is that we must expiate our faults and sanctify ourselves with Jesus.

Moreover, is not this the teaching of the Apostle, who, in his Epistle to the Colossians, asserts that Jesus and we ourselves form, in a spiritual sense, a moral entity, a mystical body, whereof the Christ is Head and we the members? It is because of this that all the Saviour's satisfactions can be showered upon us and that we, in return, can be associated with him in his sufferings.

Here, then, we catch a glimpse of how new victims become possible. Although the Passion of the Saviour is indeed sufficient for adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation, yet the New Testament Victim has been willing to unite new beings with his Martyrdom, beings prepared to offer themselves as victims also, in order to extend his Sacrifice all through the ages.

These are the victims of the Church, whom we shall now consider—the counterpart of the Old Testament victims, and with them forming the encircling frame for the Great Victim slain on Calvary. It is as well to emphasize, however, that their immolation is but the prolongation of the Sacrifice of Golgotha, perpetuated in the Mystical Body of Christ for the completion of his Passion and the fulfilment, in this world, of his redemptive work.

CHAPTER III

VICTIMS IN THE CHURCH

THERE is, in this world, but one true sacrifice, the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. Old Testament victims were acceptable to Yahweh only through being virtually connected with the Sacrifice of Jesus; and the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which, ever since the Last Supper and Calvary, has been perpetuated through the centuries upon the Catholic altar, is but the mystic representation of the Sacrifice on Golgotha.

Although the gloriously risen Christ no longer suffers in his Person, according to S Paul, he still is able to experience pain in all the members of his mystical Body, the Church. This is a difficult and perplexing doctrine; let us, then, strive to explain it and to set it forth in all its fruitfulness.

* * * * *

And first, what is the Church? In the Catholic sense of the word, it is not an edifice of stone in which the faithful meet to pray, but stands for the company of all Christians obedient to the Pope and to the Bishops holding office under his authority. This definition from the catechism, excellent in itself, is nevertheless inadequate in that it does not demonstrate the eminently spiritual character of this, the Saviour's work. The Church, indeed, must be considered, not merely as a body of individuals with the same ideal, obeying the same laws, marching under the orders of

the same commanders, but something which is, above all, immaterial, supernatural and divine. Let it be said at once that it is the very life of God revealing himself in a section of humanity attached to him by spiritual ties. It is God the Father showing himself to the world in the Person of his Son, through the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, and stirring souls by means of the secret operations of the Holy Spirit.

The Church, as says S Paul, is the Mystical Body of Christ, with Jesus as the Head and we as members; it is a living entity, a spiritual organism, and a unique whole, which spreads, develops, and increases with the expansion of the divine life in the souls of the faithful called to an ever-higher level of sanctity. Germain Long-Hasselmans, in a short brochure, has admirably shown that the apostolate is the manifestation of this divine vitality, in view of the ever-increasing growth of the Mystical Body of Christ across the centuries and throughout the world.

We must not wonder at this doctrine. The same life, says S Paul, the life of the Father, flows from the Father into Jesus and flows from Jesus into us; by nature into him, and by adoption into us. Hence, according to the teaching of the Apostle and of Christ himself, who said, on earth: "I am the vine: you the branches," the Personal Christ; that is to say, the Human-Divine Person of Jesus, once dwelling in Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem, now living in the Eucharist, does not make up the whole Christ by himself alone. For the whole Christ consists of Jesus —that is, the Personal Christ—and of ourselves united with him in his Mystical Body.[1] How far the

[1] See R. Plus, S. J., *The Ideal of Reparation.*

catechism definition falls below this concept of the Church!

Regarded from this point of view, the Church is indeed none other than the Christ himself, extending and perpetuating himself in the souls of the faithful through the ages. Because she lives and wills to live, she battles with the opposing forces striving to overpower her or retard her growth; because she longs to enlarge her borders and become all-conquering, she chastens herself and suffers like her Master, prolonging thus, in every age, the Passion of the Saviour.

And is not this, indeed, the teaching of the Scriptures and of the Church herself? Pascal declares that "Christ will be in agony until the end of the world," and this idea of his is but the echo of S Leo's words. This holy Pope affirms for his part that "the Passion of the Saviour will endure to the end of time."[1] Just as no single member of the physical Body of the "Personal Christ" was spared in the Saviour's Passion, so, in the course of the ages, not a single member of the "Whole Christ's" Mystical Body will escape without suffering. It is therefore necessary for each one of us to join his sufferings with the sufferings of Jesus and so co-operate with him, in some sort, in his redemptive work.

As early as the first years of the Church's life S Paul proclaimed this truth, using the personal form:[2] "(I) fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his Body, which is the Church." In what sense are these words to be interpreted? Many there are who miss the meaning of this lofty saying, and whom its doctrine would appear to scandalize. According to them, Redemption

[1] *Feria ult. de Passione Domini.* [2] Col. i, 24.

could not have been truly efficacious if we must needs still suffer, after the death of Christ, for the completion and fulfilling of his work. He who maintains this attitude and argues in this strain has failed to comprehend the admirable doctrine of the Mystical Body. S Paul is not suggesting, by these words, that the Redeemer's Passion was inadequate to pay the price of sin and bring about the world's salvation, nor that the adding of the quota of our pain to his is necessary to exhaust the bitter measure of the chastisements to be fulfilled. For by his immolation of himself Jesus has superabundantly satisfied God's justice; but though, to save us, he was substituted for us as an innocent Victim, it does not therefore follow that he wishes to dispense us from all personal effort. He wills that we should be incorporated with him, and with him be crucified; for though in him who is the Head nothing is wanting to the sum of sanctifying and atoning pain, in us, who are his members and as his members should be suffering in union with him, something indeed is lacking. Shall we insult him by repudiating the great honour offered us of being associated with his Martyrdom?

Let us at least endeavour to assimilate the following doctrine: that Jesus had no need of us for the accomplishment of the Redemption; he only wills us to perpetuate his work. He is the Redeeming Christ; we Christians who are, through Baptism, participators in his life and, *ipso facto,* other Christs, must also be *redeeming* Christs. *Christianus alter Christus*—"The Christian is another Christ," asserts a Father of the Church.

And so, as Christs with him, we must, like him, take up our cross, ascend the steep of Calvary, and

share his sufferings on Golgotha. If our redemption is indeed effected only through the immolation of the Christ himself, it is fulfilled, perpetuated, and extended in the immolation of ourselves—in us who are united with him in his Church. But it is manifest that the results are not the same. His share is still of infinite worth, while ours, remaining finite, yet is necessary like the drop of water added to the chalice full of wine, lost in it, and to all appearances of no advantage, but not superfluous since it is requisite for the oblation of the sacrifice.

Moreover, do we not break away from fetters of sin and rise towards perfection just in so far as we are suffering with Christ? Is it not also true that in so far as we refuse redemption we do imperil the adorable work of Jesus on the Cross? Hence we achieve redemption in the measure of our suffering him to realize himself in us, and, by our merits and in virtue of reversibility of grace, make it effectual in the souls of those around us.

* * * * *

And here we are faced again by the beautiful doctrine of the "victim soul." For Christ not only wishes us to suffer with him for the achieving of our individual redemption; he calls, as well, for volunteers of suffering who, following in his footsteps, will ascend to Calvary there to deliver sinners. In other words, he asks for "expiating souls," "reparative" and "victim" souls.

Here it is not for us to question the decisions of the Heavenly Will, but rather to accept them and dispose ourselves to comprehend them and to draw out all their fruitfulness. Moreover, History has

proved that in the course of centuries volunteers of suffering have always made an offering of themselves to labour for the restoration of the supernatural balance, overthrown by superfluity of sin and crime.

"When, in the weighing up of virtues and of vices," says Canon Boissonnot, "the balance laden with iniquities outweighs the balance of good works, these immolated victims load the scale of goodness with the counter-balance of their tortures, and thus restore stability once more. And when, at certain periods, the weight of evil dips so violently that all is threatened with destruction, then does the number of these victims instantly increase. Therefore, at intervals appearing to be governed by some hidden law, the Church is witness of the rise within herself of particular religious orders or of certain individuals, so mighty in their virtue, in courage and achievement, that they would seem to sum up in themselves the attributes of centuries."[1]

And there is nothing so surprising in the doctrine. This law of intimate fellowship and solidarity, fundamentally Christian, has been admirably comprehended and applied by saints and heroes who have offered themselves for the supernatural holocaust.

Up to a certain point, indeed, each soul must be responsible for the offences of her fellows. She is in duty bound to offer reparation for their sin and, from the store of her individual merits, to reimburse her brethren who themselves are destitute of merit or even go so far as the refusal to acquire it. This, on the broadest lines, is the victim's function.

[1] Chanoine Boissonnot, *La Lydwine de Touraine, Anne-Berthe de Béthune, Abbesse de Beaumont-les-Tours* (Mame), p. 33.

In imitation of their Master, these victims interpose themselves between Heaven and earth, shouldering, as it were, the crimes of sinners, with intent to expiate them, and—since these sins cry out to God for vengeance—accepting, in so doing, loads of responsibility which well may be immense. So, in this manner, they complete redemption and perpetuate, through all the ages, that mystery of salvation resolved in Christ's self-substitution for the sinner. Being stainless, Jesus had no need of expiation; and his atonement, profitless to himself, became diverted to the gain of guilty souls. In similar manner, victims, innocent like him, desire of God that he will see in them nought but the crimes of sinners. Discovering in their love a hidden secret which none but love could have devised, they nail themselves upon the Cross, filling that side of it unoccupied by Jesus, and so give God what he has stood in need of since the Saviour's Resurrection; that is to say, the possibility of suffering and atoning. They long, as Jesus did, for chastisement, and give themselves for the atonement (sometimes by means of bitter sufferings) of sins which they themselves have not committed. The more they suffer, the more do they desire to suffer, so great their love, so closely does it imitate the love of Jesus for his Father and for souls. Herein we see that mystery of infinite love entitled by S Paul the "folly of the Cross."

* * * * *

And all these victims crowd upon each other's footsteps down the ages.

First we behold them on the Hill of Calvary. For there, in close proximity to Jesus, stands his Mother, offering herself as victim too, since she, as co-

redemptress of the human race, contributes by her sufferings to the saving of the sinner. Beside her, Mary Magdalen and John, like her, present their anguish; and on the road to Golgotha, Simon, who bears the Cross, Veronica and all the holy women associate themselves already with the sufferings of Jesus. Though, at this hour of the Passion, all the Apostles have forsaken him and fled, they will return anon, to take their places in the host of victims, for they will go to every nation, preaching Christ, his Death and Resurrection, and laying down their lives for the dissemination and extension of the Saviour's work. S Paul, especially, once ruthless in his persecutions, but suddenly transformed into the most untiring of Apostles, refuses, from the time of his conversion onwards, to cherish any other love but that of Jesus Crucified, and he will preach it always—till his martyrdom.

Truly the age of persecution has begun. The deacon Stephen met his death by stoning, at the gates of Jerusalem, on the very morrow of Pentecost. The Christian Faith has barely shown itself upon the earth before it finds itself contending with authority and power in every form. Rome offers ghastly hecatombs of martyrs; the adepts of the new religion are dragged to torture from the Catacombs. Men, women and young girls, children and aged persons, all of them innocent of the offences laid to their charge, become the prey of savage beasts, or, still more horrible, are smeared with oil and pitch, and serve as torches to illuminate the Cæsar's gardens, amid the plaudits of a populace demoralized by Nero. The persecutions spread through all the world, sweeping away the most illustrious in the storm of tribulation. Such are

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna, to mention the most celebrated only. Amongst the virgins there arises a rivalry of hitherto unheard-of heroism, and at Rome S Cecilia and S Agnes, at Syracuse S Lucy, S Agatha at Catania, S Catherine at Alexandria, S Blandina at Lyons, lay down their lives with gladness for their Heavenly Spouse, the Crucified. Weakness opposes force, and —wonder of wonders—weakness triumphs over strength and carries all before it. All paganism in its fury is powerless to stem the tide of this great river flowing down from Calvary. The persecutions fail in all but furthering the advancement of the new religion.

With Constantine the world secures religious peace. The hitherto dishonoured Cross becomes an object to be venerated and the sign of triumph. The age of persecutions has gone by, yet still new victims are arising. If there are no more martyrs unto blood, there still are martyrs of repentance, inflicting on themselves unspeakable tortures which the world refuses them. The solitaries of the Thebaïd, with S Paul the Simple and S Anthony, now lead the way; then to the hermit life succeeds the cenobitic, for S Basil in the East, S Benedict in the West, systematize Religious Life and scatter their disciples forth for the conquest of a world still lost and wandering in the night of error, while Popes and Bishops strive with the barbarians and spread abroad the Gospel. The most illustrious of these are, of the Sovereign Pontiffs, S Leo and S Gregory, and of the Bishops: in France, S Martin; in Germany, S Boniface; in Denmark, S Anskar; S Adalbert in Poland; SS Cyril and Methodius in Russia and Bulgaria.

S Bernard, S Gertrude, and S Mechtilde give a special radiance to the Religious Life, shedding beyond the cloister the fragrance of their virtues and the reflection of their glowing love for God. Then, in the Middle Ages, when Christianity, submitting to the deadening influence of prosperity, appears to be growing cold, two great Apostles come from their retirement. S Dominic and S Francis bring in their train whole multitudes of ardent preachers, teaching the Evangelical virtues both by word and by example. In Italy appears, a little later, S Catherine of Siena, a victim sharing with her Lord the agonies of the Passion and rescuing the Papacy from all the perils with which it stands surrounded. In France, S Joan, a martyr both of soul and body, frees her nation, eldest daughter of the Church, from the invading enemy, and, in Holland, a despised invalid—S Lydwine of Schiedam—exposed to every kind of opposition, draws down upon the world the favour and the pardon of the Lord.

And so the golden chain of victims crucified is ever lengthening. When, in the sixteenth century, a German monk named Luther is busy sowing everywhere the seeds of heresy and schism, a Spanish gentleman of Loyola, Ignatius, throughout his life exposed to persecution and pursued by hatred even after death, raises a Society which, in face of the Reformers' arrogance, preaches perpetual obedience and renunciation. Later still, to melt the icy chill produced by heresy, come S Teresa and S John of the Cross, setting the whole world mightily ablaze with love divine. At length, in France, S Jane de Chantal and S Francis de Sales make ready, by the founding of their Order of the Visitation, for that supremacy of

the Most Sacred Heart, which S Margaret Mary, one of their spiritual daughters, will one day be commissioned to inaugurate throughout the world.

There would be nothing easier than to extend the list, for side by side with these great masters of perfection stand divers victims who remain obscure. But their enumeration would involve us in research through the whole calendar of Saints; and we must therefore be content to mention none but the most outstanding victims of more recent times.

The *fifteenth century* yields, in *Italy:* Bl. Columba of Rieti, Blessed Osanna, Patron Saint of Mantua, and S Catherine of Genoa.

The *sixteenth century,* again in *Italy,* produces Maria Bagnesi, Catherine of Ricci, and Archangela Tardera.

In the *seventeenth century,* still in *Italy:* S Magdalen of Pazzi, the two Pudenziana Zagnoni, Blessed Passidea of Siena, Ursula Benincasa, Lucia Gonzales, Paula of S Teresa, Jane Mary of the Cross.

In *France:* Agnes of Langeac, Jacqueline of the Holy Spirit, Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament, Marie-Angélique de la Providence, Anne-Berthe of Béthune, abbess of Beaumont-les-Tours.

In *Spain:* The Venerable Stéphanie of the Apostles, Agatha of the Cross, Marina Escobar, Mary of the Most Holy Trinity.

In *Belgium:* Marie Ock.

In the *eighteenth century:* In *Italy:* Fialetta-Rosa Fialetti, S Veronica Giuliani, S Maria-Francesca of the Five Wounds.

In *France:* Marcelline Pauper, Sœur de Charité at Nevers.

In the *nineteenth century Italy* has: Elizabeth

Canori Mora, Blessed Anna-Maria Taïgi, and Maria-Rosa Andreani.

In *France:* Sœur Bernard de la Croix, Marie de Saint Pierre de la Sainte Famille, Marie du Bourg, Marie-Catherine Putigny.

Germany: Anne Catherine Emmerich and Marie-Agnes Steiner.

Spain: Barbara of Saint Dominic.

Switzerland: Marie-Josepha Kuni.

Belgium: Louise Lateau.

The Tyrol: Many who have received the Stigmata, amongst them Maria Dominica Lazzari and Maria Moerl.[1]

Thus we succeed in establishing the fact that, though the expression "victim souls" is but a recent one, appearing only in the latter portion of the century just passed, and being unknown in earlier times, the truth which it asserts has been revealed in every age and is apparent even at the dawn of Christianity. No martyr and no saint but has been sacrificed and crucified, willingly yielding up the springs of life, blood of his body and blood of his soul, for the glory of God and the salvation of his brethren, his sufferings joined to Christ's upon the Cross.

And, happily for our age, the tale goes on, but now it is in France that volunteers of suffering increase. In a society whose immorality and unbelief, paraded without shame, demand a supernatural satisfaction, they have become a mighty host. And here again are quoted none but the most familiar names.

[1] For documents dealing with this subject, see Imbert-Gourbeyre's *La Stigmatisation,* 2 volumes (Bellet, Clermont-Ferrand).

Close to our own times we must name Père Yenveux;[1] Monseigneur Verjus, Missionary of the Sacred Heart;[2] Père Prévost,[3] of the Prêtres du Sacré Cœur; and, amongst women, Marie de Saint-Pierre of Tours;[4] Théodolinde Dubouché, in religion Mère Marie-Thérèse de Jésus;[5] Xaverine de Maistre, in religion Mère Thérèse de Jésus;[6] Marie-Anne Hervé-Bazin, in religion Mère Marie de l'Agnus Dei;[7] Caroline Lioger, in religion Mère Marie-Véronique du Cœur de Jésus;[8] Marie Deluil-Martigny, in religion Mère Marie de Jésus;[9] Madeleine Ulrich, in religion Sœur Marie de Jésus;[10] Sœur Marie-Joséphine de Jésus, religieuse adoratrice du Sacré Cœur;[11] Marie du Divin Cœur, née de Droste-Vischering;[12] Mathilde de Nédonchel;[13] Claire Poumier;[14] Caroline Clément;[15] Marie-Thérèse Trannin;[16] Emilie d'Oultremont;[17] Lucie-Christine;[18] Simone Denniel;[19] Thérèse Durnerin;[20] Séraphie-Adèle;[21] Marie de la

[1] By l'Abbé Thiriet (Amat, Paris).
[2] By Jean Vaudon (Retaux, Paris).
[3] By Georges Bertrand (Desclée, Paris).
[4] By Chan. Janvier (Oratoire de la Sainte Face, Tours).
[5] By Mgr. d'Hulst (Poussielgue, Paris).
[6] By Mgr. Gay (Oudin, Paris).
[7] By Mme. S. S. (Perrin, Paris).
[8] By André Prévost (Casterman, Tournai).
[9] By le Chan. Laplace (Lecoffre, Paris).
[10] *Une Victime d'Amour* (Desclée, Paris).
[11] From the Réligieuses Adoratrices du Sacré-Cœur (Lyon).
[12] By l'Abbé Chasle (Beauchesne, Paris).
[13] By Chan. Laplace (Dureuil, Bourg).
[14] From Dureuil, Bourg.
[15] By R. P. Henry (Téqui, Paris).
[16] By l'Abbé Louis Ducrocq (Beauchesne, Paris).
[17] By P. Suau (Casterman, Tournai).
[18] 36, Rue d'Ulm, or from Beauchesne, Paris.
[19] By Fleury-Divès (Vitte, Lyon).
[20] By M. Hanrez (Librairie Saint-Paul, Paris).
[21] By Fleury-Divès (Lethielleux, Paris).

Trinité, also known as the Consummata;[1] and, of those who call for the greatest admiration, Sœur Marie-Céline de la Présentation;[2] Sœur Elisabeth de la Trinité, of the Carmel of Dijon;[3] and towering above them all, with her rapturous smile, S Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, of the Carmel of Lisieux.[4]

In *Italy,* Benigna Consolata Ferrero[5] and Gemma Galgani,[6] whose lives abound with mystical phenomena, most worthily perpetuate their country's great traditions.

The Christianity of the twentieth century is clearly just as fruitful and alive as was the Christianity of the Primitive Church. As in the past, great multitudes of victims present themselves as offerings for sacrifice. We have no longer with us martyrs of the body, whose sufferings endure but for an hour or two, but martyrs of the heart, whose immolation is for their whole life long. It even seems that, during the past quarter of a century, the longing has arisen for ever-deeper ventures into the ways of love. Ideas of reparation which formerly sufficed for ardent souls, no longer satisfy the needs of hearts aflame for sacrifice. There is an eager pressing on towards the victim state, the final summit of the life of reparation. This wondrous efflorescence of sublime vocations seems, in its sure establishment, to hold the promise of regeneration for these latter days.

And hence the Popes, faced with the rapid growth

[1] With an introduction by Reoul Plus, S. J. (*Apostolat de la Prière,* Toulouse).
[2] By a Poor Clare (Desclée, Paris).
[3] Imprimerie Jobard (Dijon).
[4] Carmel de Lisieux. [5] Imprimerie Roudel (Lyon).
[6] By R. P. Germain (Librairie Mignard, Paris).

of evil, and well aware of the reversibility of grace, a law which has its basis in the doctrine of redemption and the communion of Saints, have fully grasped the urgent need of many victims. In spite of all the dangers which beset these ways, they have not feared to give encouragement to souls to enter on the paths which lead to saving and redeeming states. Pius IX, of holy memory, suggests to the Superior of a religious order that generous souls should be invited to make an offering of themselves to God, as victims of atonement, for converting of sinners. Leo XIII, in an encyclical addressed to France in 1884, exhorts the souls within the monasteries to appease the wrath of God by prayer and penitence and offering of their lives. Pius X again commends an association where many of the members give themselves to God as expiating victims. And Benedict XV, when, in 1902, as Giacomo della Chiesa, he is deputising for the Secretary of State, writes to the biographer of Mother Marie-Véronique, the foundress of the Sœurs Victimes du Sacré Cœur de Jésus, that the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII "observes with pleasure, in an age which is addicted more than ever to refinements of sensuality, that it has been found possible to recommend, as a conspicuous example, one the chief aspiration of whose soul was the desire to offer up herself as victim, in imitation of the Son of God."

Is it surprising that encouragements like these should countenance the individual enterprise which answers to the needs of times so troubled that they seem to call imperatively for bloody immolations?

Our Lord, in truth, has need of many victims, if we may put our trust in certain of his revelations. Set over against the wickedness of the world which

wounds his love, he still finds too few Christians who are prepared to follow him with generous courage in the way of suffering. And so the call heeded by certain souls becomes more urgent, and passes on from lip to lip, throughout the ranks of ardent souls whose instinct is for sacrifice.

But (we shall have occasion to repeat this later) these difficult ways must not be undertaken save with prudence and discretion. Certain persons think of the victim life as nothing further than a life of expiation and of reparation. Yet this is one side only of the problem.

Our aim will be to treat of victim states on strictly theological lines, keeping in view the four great ends of sacrifice—viz., adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation. There are, in actual fact, victims of adoration and of praise, victims of thanksgiving and grateful recognition, victims of prayer and supplication, victims of expiation and of reparation. Keeping these divers victims in our minds, we shall consider, in the victim state, that which most nearly corresponds with Jesus' state of soul on Calvary, in his great Sacrifice which is at once latreutic, eucharistic, supplicatory, and atoning, propitiatory and of expiation. This is the aspect of the subject which we purpose to consider in the course of our investigation.

In bringing this chapter to a close and so concluding the first portion of our work, may we entreat a hearing for an echo of that sorrowful and loving plaint of Jesus, and make a vehement appeal to generous souls, enamoured of the way of suffering, importuned by the Holy Spirit, and feeling themselves drawn to tread the "royal highway of the Cross," following in the footprints of their Heavenly Master? If God

indeed is calling them, let them respond with fervour, pressing forward to the victim state till they, too, with S Paul and all the Saints, join in fulfilling the redeeming sacrifice.

The present age has suffered much abuse, but if, externally, it bears the marks of paganism, it also holds rare spirits, who, in spite of all, enshrine undreamt-of forces and a secret spring of supernatural power. We do not hesitate to claim for it a yield of saints and victims and of crucified souls such as no other epoch can surpass. In spite of all appearance to the contrary, there is no lack of souls in whom there burns the passion of pure love, and who, in secret, give themselves with generous fervour to the stern practices of penitence.

Moreover, has not the Great War through which we have so lately passed produced a plenteous yield of immolation and renunciation and of sacrifice? Were not those countless heroes, fallen on the field of honour, all actual and veritable victims? Their deaths, so joyously accepted in union with the Saviour's death, were not in vain, because, in close conjunction with the martyrdom of Jesus, they, too, became a sacrifice of expiation and of universal restitution.

And with those martyrs of the war were other victims—mothers, sweethearts, wives—not called upon indeed to give their blood, but shedding with their tears the very life-blood of their souls; joining their secret anguish to the soldiers' pain, and, as it were, presenting, through their prayer, for the redemption of the world, the sum of woe inflicted by the war. Like Mary upon Calvary, have they not also stood beneath the Cross?

Let all so stricken in heart look up from earthly things and fix their eyes on Heaven. Who knows what merciful designs God had for them in secret while he struck the blow? Instead of murmuring and complaining, let them accept their lot, calling to memory how the Saviour said: "Blessed are they that mourn," for this is certain, be it now or only after weary years of waiting, Jesus will change to tears of joy the bitter tears of those who mount with him to Golgotha.

Let them, then, hasten to increase the ranks of victims stretching down the ages: of sufferers visited with mysterious ills beyond the power of science to explain, of tortured souls apparently pursued by a perpetual malediction, who, in spite of all their merits, seem debarred from tasting, in this world, the slightest human satisfaction; of innocent souls enduring in their inmost being supernatural pains and moral sufferings, all received with joy. . . .

The sufferings of Jesus were essential for the saving of the world; and volunteers for suffering, with a thirst to drink its cup, are needed, also, in the heart of the community. Happy indeed the souls appointed to this lofty mission by the Heavenly Master! their calling holy, their office sacred, and their ministry already bearing in itself the stamp of the eternal. Their life here may be marked by every kind of failure and disaster, but in the world to come will one day be revealed illumined with the dazzling lustre of redemptive sacrifice. All earthly things are passing, God alone remains; and nothing shall endure eternally save supernatural works marked with the saving token of the Cross.

PART II

DOGMATIC AND MORAL SURVEY

CHAPTER I

THE VICTIM SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

AT the beginning of this work the victim life has been considered from the historical point of view, and we have seen that the material of sacrifice consisted, in Old Testament rites, of animals alone; in the New Testament, of Jesus Christ himself, embodying all the victims of the world; and in the Church, of spiritual victims, who incorporate themselves with Jesus the great Victim upon Golgotha, extending and completing his tremendous Sacrifice throughout all ages.

Abandoning henceforth the historical aspect of the question, we will attempt to contemplate it from a moral and dogmatic point of view. And first of all, then, to proceed with method, we will devote a chapter to the demonstration of this truth: *the Christian life is also a victim life,* joined to that life of Jesus brought to a close upon the Cross. At first sight this may seem to be an exaggerated statement, but if the question is to have the full attention it deserves, the claim must necessarily be admitted.

It is unfortunate that, in our current speech, the expression "victim" has acquired a depreciatory meaning, derogatory to the truth for which it stands. There is no hesitation about speaking, in the spiritual life, of immolation, or of renunciation, or of sacrifice, but when it is a question of becoming victims, average souls take fright, and criticise without reflection those

others who, with perfect logic as regards themselves and Christian doctrine, desire to stretch themselves courageously full length with Jesus on the Cross.

And yet there is no sacrifice without a victim; nor can we immolate ourselves without becoming victims. If the term "sacrifice" denotes *élan*, a generous giving of self, an immolation voluntary or accepted, the expression "victim" need not represent a cheerless resignation in the face of pain, for there may equally be a joyous impulse in renunciation. The soul can give herself as victim for the supernatural holocaust, of free intent and in true gaiety of heart. This is how Jesus bore himself as Victim, and this is how he must be imitated on the way of life, which, after all, when all is said and done, is nought but the way of the Cross.

Alas! how many Christian souls refuse to admit this truth, and, urged by an inordinate desire for pleasure, attempt to reconcile the spirit of the world with that of their Heavenly Master! They hope, in doing so, to shape an easy, calm existence for themselves, exempt from all that troubles or distresses. And yet, as followers of Jesus Crucified, we must, in seeking to be perfect Christians, complete in all its fulness the magnificent design of spiritual life which he has traced for us, walking, like him, along the paths of pain. We are not placed on earth for our enjoyment, but rather that by suffering we may merit Heaven.

And so, with the desire to follow Jesus not to the Upper Room alone but also on to Calvary, we purpose to pursue the study of this problem to its end. And, that there may be no excuse for charges of exaggeration, we shall present our doctrine founded

not on grounds of sentimental fitness nor upon reasons of pure mysticism, but based, as all theological theses are, upon the testimony of the Scripture, of the Fathers, and of Reason. Our case once stated, it will be impossible to hold that it is either dangerous or false, for it must necessarily be admitted that the stamp it bears is that of Christ's eternal truth.

* * * * *

First, for the clearer understanding of the problem, we venture to make sundry observations likely to throw light upon the question.

It is an universally accepted truth, borne out at every moment of our life, that man is made for happiness.

But what is happiness? The philosophical answer is that happiness is a resultant, a consequence, a manner of conclusion, deriving normally from the orderly exercise of our faculties in the fulfilment of their functions: it is the satisfaction which our powers enjoy when they are bent upon an object affording them delight, or when they have attained their end. The body feels a measure of well-being when it develops normally; the mind finds satisfaction in discovery of a truth now for the first time apprehended; the heart is blissful in the presence of that object of its love which it is able to enjoy. Thus pleasure and delight are the resultant of the application of our powers, resting upon some object capable, for the moment, of satisfying their desire, or having gained their end. When man's capacities attain their goal, the consequence is, for him, a certain measure of enjoyment—and this is happiness, a happiness proportioned to the value of the end pursued. For let

the object sought be transitory and finite, the happiness will correspondingly be limited and transient; but if the object be immutable and infinite, the joy becomes unbounded and eternal.

Moreover, it is worthy of remark that, in proportion to the development of our powers, the gratification which they seek grows ever greater, and yet they are perpetually unsatisfied. In this world man disquiets himself in vain; he never can succeed in quenching that insistent thirst for happiness deep hidden in his being and a source of constant torment from the cradle to the grave. What is the meaning of this dreadful pain which racks him ceaselessly, this fire unquenchable consuming him without destroying him? He may indeed experience true joys upon this earth, but he can never attain to perfect satisfaction until, in Heaven, he finds himself at last in full possession of his God, who only can afford him pleasure that is infinite.

With these considerations in our mind, the meaning of existence becomes less difficult to understand.[1] In truth, the problem of our life all centres in this question of capital importance: "Are we to look for happiness here on earth, or seek it only in our Heavenly home?"

The answer to the question is apparent in the story of the Fall. Man, in the beginning, was created in a state of sanctity and happiness. Set in the earthly Paradise, his life afforded him no possible excuse for murmuring, but then befell the unexpected circumstance which brought disaster in its train. Sin came, and on its heels disgrace. Suffering, so far unknown

[1] See our study on "The meaning of life," or the Christian solution of the question "Is life worth living?"

to man, descended on him like a bird of prey. "*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,*"[1] is God's decree to Adam, and, to the woman, "*In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.*"[2] Here was the awful malediction of Almighty God, falling on every member of the human race, until the end of time. From that day forward man must struggle, toil, and suffer, to regain the Paradise which he had lost, and merit everlasting joys.

The true transcendency of Christian doctrine shows more plainly in the light of these ideas. To Jesus, come to save the world, and by his preaching throwing light reflected from infinity upon the problem, our human life exists and is of value and significance only in its relationship with the eternal kingdom. "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"[3] He says to his disciples: Life upon earth is but the prelude to another life, which shall hereafter be prolonged throughout all ages. It follows that the first life must be sacrificed to the advantage of the second, and that none but eternal interests must be sought for in this world. "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."[4] And for this reason Jesus asks of us detachment from the things of earth and teaches us to utilise this life's resources with a view to everlasting joys. "For he that will save his life shall lose it: and *he that shall lose his life for my sake shall*

[1] Gen. iii, 19.
[2] Gen. iii, 16.
[3] Matt. xvi, 26.
[4] Matt. vi, 19, 20.

find it,"[1] he says again with perfect truth, though in a paradox.

Thus he extends our life beyond the confines of this earth's horizons. He preaches, before all, God's Kingdom and his Righteousness; in other words, he preaches holiness. "Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy,"[2] was said by Yahweh through the voice of Moses. "Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect,"[3] endorses Jesus in the Gospel. And, according to the Galilean Teacher, this holiness is nothing other than the exercise of charity pressed to its utmost limits: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind: and thy neighbour as thyself."[4]

But love, in this world, calls for sacrifice. The love of God or neighbour is never without pain. For loving is not merely a receiving and enjoying, but also suffering and self-renunciation, and as all sanctity is gathered up into the single virtue, charity, to seek perfection means, in truth, for Christian souls, a life of sacrifice. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away,"[5] says the Saviour. "For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction . . . how narrow that which leadeth to life!"[6] Hence we need not wonder at the part which suffering plays in the great business of salvation laid on us by Christ.

Nevertheless, the Master does not cast his teaching in didatic form. To rule and rigid system he prefers a liberty of conduct and a certain mental independence. Appealing to the Oriental mind, with its

[1] Matt. xvi, 25. [2] Lev. xix, 2. [3] Matt. v, 48.
[4] Luke x, 27. [5] Matt. xi, 12. [6] Matt. vii, 13, 14.

Semitic cast of understanding, he gathers up his meaning, which is "spirit and life," in several startling phrases of an infinite perfection.

Hear him upon the Mount, where he has set himself the better to be heard across the ages, lauding the loveliness of suffering and rapture of the Cross. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," he says, "for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven! Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land! Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted! Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill! Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy! Blessed are the clean in heart: for they shall see God! Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God! Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven! Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets that were before you."[1]

Here at one stroke we see unfolded a whole system of ascetics, a perfect scheme of life, an ordered continuity of virtues, planned to lead us on by death to life; difficult virtues, which amazed the ancient world by running counter to the old conceptions of a lax and sensual life, but fruitful virtues also, destined for the regeneration of humanity, foundering in the mire of paganism, and for the propagation of the splendid fruits of Christian civilisation. These are humility, poverty, chastity, obedience, crowned by faith, hope, and charity, all equally demanding sacrifice.

[1] Matt. v, 3-12.

The whole of Christian doctrine is, in very truth, summed up in the love of the Cross. Jesus has said it plainly in the Gospel. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and *take up his cross and follow me*."[1] "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it."[2] "Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after he cannot be my disciple."[3]

This is stern doctrine on the face of it, and yet begetting joy. The Cross is hard, but also full of sweetness.

Perhaps these words of Jesus, which affirm the joy afforded by the Cross, not only in the world to come but also here on earth amidst the bitterest afflictions, have not been adequately stressed.

Let us recall the Gospel episode in which the words occur. The rich young man with great possessions has departed, and the Master has emphatically shown how hard it is for those who cling to earthly riches to obtain salvation; when Peter, with his usual eagerness for putting himself forward, cries: "Behold, we have left all things and have followed thee: what therefore shall we have?" And Jesus answers: "Amen, I say unto you, that you, who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and everyone that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for

[1] Matt. xvi, 24. [2] Matt. x, 37-39. [3] Luke xiv, 27.

my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold now in this present time, with persecutions; and in the world to come life everlasting."[1] So, even in this world, that soul will find its happiness, which has espoused pain and followed Jesus on the way to Calvary.

And this is not the only word which he has spoken on the subject. Elsewhere he says again to those who weep: "Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you; for my yoke is sweet and my burden light."[2] What other meaning can this have if not that the Cross distils a marvellous balm, healing all wounds and soothing suffering? Oh, happy truth! experienced by the Martyrs, who in the midst of torment sang the praise of God, and also by the Saints, who in their moral anguish yet found strength to smile.

So Christianity is never a religion of immediate guerdon and of finished egoism, but a training-school of true devotion and of sacrifice. Some charge it with the preaching of a creed of death, because of its insistence on renunciation; but its accusers have not grasped the fact that when it asks for mortification, this is not for the diminishing of humanity, but as a cure for faults which are the outcome of original sin. There is no recognition of renunciation from the Christian standpoint, save in so far as it assists in the transition of the human being to a higher life. There is, in fact, no moral transformation without suffering, either in man or in the world. For pain conditions progress, and it is pain which makes growth possible to man. Let us no longer wonder that the Master's teaching calls for sacrifice.

[1] Matt. xix, 29; Mark x, 30; Luke xviii, 29.
[2] Matt. xi, 28-30.

And further, Jesus, preaching love of suffering, himself is our example in the ways of sacrifice. He came on earth to suffer, and as Victim he ascends to Golgotha. He asks of those who try to follow him, that they will also bear the cross, desiring his disciples to present themselves, like him, as victims, reproducing in themselves the sufferings of his Soul throughout his Martyrdom.

The four Evangelists have given us no very definite text upon this subject in their written records of the words of Jesus, but the two chief Apostles have supplied this lack of witness most explicitly.

S Paul, indeed, in his Epistle to the Romans, expressly bids the Christians of the Eternal City: *Obsecro vos, fratres, per misericordiam Dei, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum*—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God: your reasonable service."[1] So the Apostle of the Gentiles calls us to be victims with the Victim Jesus.

S Peter, in his turn, writes in his first Epistle: *Ipsi tanquam lapides vivi super aedificamini, domus spiritualis, sacerdotium sanctum, offerre spirituales Hostias, acceptabiles Deo per Jesum Christum*—"Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."[2]

Does not this plainly mean that, to the first Pope's mind, Christians must be the priests and victims of their personal sacrifice?

We shall see, later, how these words must be inter-

[1] Rom. xii, 1. [2] 1 Pet. ii, 5.

preted, and how far we must understand them literally. At present we will rest content with having called attention to them, and with the observation that the great Apostles, S Peter and S Paul, invite us to be victims after the example of their Master, the Victim of Mount Calvary.

All that has gone before should therefore prove to us that Holy Scripture calls us to be more and more pervaded by the spirit of the Saviour and to associate ourselves with Jesus in his Martyrdom. United with him in his Mystical Body, Holy Church, we are to share his sufferings and continue his redeeming Sacrifice throughout the ages. Incorporate with him who by his immolation on the Cross of Calvary procures the glory of his Father, we, too, if faithful to the principle of supernatural life, are bound to adopt the attitude of victim and to render glory to the Father through our sacrifice. Such is the inference to be deduced from an examination of these passages, and, still more surely, from the spirit of the Christian Faith which shines out from the pages of the Holy Gospel.

* * * * *

If some refuse to be persuaded by this scriptural evidence, they possibly may condescend to weigh the witness of Tradition, a testimony which is unimpeachable. The many Churchmen who have written upon this question comment, for the most part, on the passages which we have quoted from S Peter and S Paul, and teach that every Christian is to be a victim with the One Great Victim of the ages.

The first in point of time is Origen, about the ending of the second century A.D. Dwelling upon the text from the Epistle to the Romans, he declares that

all the followers of Jesus should look upon themselves as spiritual victims, and arranges them in four distinct divisions: "After Apostles"—whom he ranks apart, either because of their prerogatives as the foundations of the Church, or simply owing to the lofty dignity of Priesthood, which adorns them—"the foremost victims are," he says, "the martyrs; the second in order, consecrated virgins; the third, those persons living in a state of chastity."[1] The fourth rank, he affirms, in substance, to be married persons, for all these souls are capable of self-offering as victims. And so we find the principle acknowledged in the Primitive Church.

In the third century Lactantius writes: "The worship truly worthy of our God is rendered by the soul who offers herself before his Majesty, *remaining there in the condition of a spotless victim!*"[2]

S Ambrose, somewhat later, speaking of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel, says that the sacrifice of the firstfruits asked of us by God consists in *offering ourselves as victims,* first of all, and that it is only after this oblation that we can offer any other gift."[3]

S Jerome has expressed the same idea when, in his commentary upon the Psalms, dwelling upon the passage in Psalm xcv: *Tollite hostias et introite in atria ejus*—"Bring sacrifices and come into his courts"; he notes that it applies to holy, living victims, the victims pleasing unto God, of whom S Paul speaks in the Epistle to the Romans, adding:

[1] Origen, *Comment. in Epist. ad Rom.,* lib. ix, *P.G.,* tom. II, xiv, col. 1205.

[2] Lactantius, *De Div. Instit.,* lib. vi, c. ii, *P.L.,* tom. VI, col. 640.

[3] *Of Cain and Abel,* lib. II, vi, No. 19, *P.L.,* tom. XIV, col. 369.

"Seek them, these victims, for yourselves must furnish them." But you may ask: "What manner of victims are they?" and himself supplies the answer in his closing words: "*Yourselves must be the victims.*"[1]

The theme is a familiar one to S Augustine, who in his *City of God* enlarges on it at considerable length. "All the whole city of the redeemed—that is to say, the Church and all the Company of Saints," he writes, "is a universal sacrifice. This sacrifice is offered up to God by Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, who, in his Passion, sacrificed himself in order that we might become his Mystical Body, a Body with a Kingly Head indeed. He took upon himself the form of a slave, and it was in this form that he made offering of himself, for it is only in this state of slavery that he is Mediator, Priest, and Sacrifice. And this is why the Apostle, having urged us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, to render him a worship of the spirit, not to conform to this world but to be transformed in a renewing of the mind, that we may come to know what is the perfect Will of God for us—which is none other than our personal sacrifice—goes on to say: "For as in one body we have many members, so we being many are one body in Christ." Here, truly, is the sacrifice of Christians: to be one body in Christ. This is, indeed, what is enacted by the Church in that great Sacrament familiar to the faithful. "*For it is plain to her that in the same oblation which she makes to God she must present her very self as offering.*"[2]

[1] S Hieron., *Breviar. in psalm. int. opp. dub.*, *P.L.*, tom. XXVI, col. 1180.
[2] *De civit. Dei*, lib. X, vi, *P.L.*, tom. XLI, col. 284.

And so we see the thesis ever more and more explicitly defined. As members of the Church by Baptism, we all are one with Jesus Christ; and he, in offering himself to God as a Sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and atonement, offers as well all Christian souls associated with him in his Mystical Body. With Jesus we are victims, and, as such, merged in the Saviour's everlasting Sacrifice, we shall one day procure the glory of our God in Heaven.

There is then nothing that need startle us in S Augustine's definite exposition of the principles which govern victim life. His teaching is no more than the expression of his private sentiments. It is recounted of him that, having heard an inner voice which questioned him: "Augustine, lovest thou me?" he answered: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," and as the Voice persisted: "How would you prove your love?" he made reply: "*I would rejoice in the descent of fire from Heaven upon me, to consume me wholly on your Altars, if I might be a holocaust acceptable to your Celestial Majesty.*" The truly enlightened piety of the illustrious Bishop could hardly have expressed itself more plainly. He was prepared, with joy, to suffer in the ardent and consuming flames of love that he might prove to God his pure and deep devotion.

But to continue with our chain of witnesses. A Bishop of Ravenna, S Peter Chrysologus, comments, about the same time, on the passage from S Paul, and echoes what S Peter teaches in his first Epistle: "The Apostle," he asserts, "in making this appeal to all men, raises them one and all, as it were, to the dignity of the Priesthood. He begs of them to make their bodies living victims. Strange exercise of the

Pontificate! For here we learn that *man must be towards himself both priest and victim!* He no more offers God an alien victim, as of yore. *His sacrifice is now himself and all that goes to make himself;* and in this manner he is truly, in himself alone, the one who sacrifices and the victim sacrificed. Strive, then, O man, to be in truth God's victim and his priest, and walk in wisdom lest you forfeit the position or neglect the signal honour which Divine Authority accords you. Put on the robe of holiness and gird yourself with chastity. Let Christ himself be the protection of your head and let his Cross be your defence. Take up the censer of prayer, unsheath the sword of the spirit, and forward! with your heart as Altar. *Offer to God with boldness the oblation of yourself.*"[1] So to S Peter Chrysologus, as he reiterates the teaching of S Peter, Christians are priests and victims of their personal sacrifice. We shall return hereafter to the consideration of how far these words are to be taken in their literal sense.

In the sixth century, Cassiodorus continues the tradition. After a life devoted to the public service, he made a holy death as Abbot of a monastery which he himself had founded at Valeria in Calabria. He writes as follows, in his commentary on the Psalter: "First we must put off the old man and afterwards present ourselves to God as sacrifices. This is the bidding of our tender Mother, Holy Church. Putting these words before us, she instructs us that all *those who have been born again in Baptism* are not to offer common victims, as of old, *but to become themselves the victims of their sacrifice. For if the Christ was sacrificed for us, how much the more should we*

[1] *Sermo* 108, *P.L.*, tom. LII, col. 500.

present ourselves to him as victims? and should we not find appropriate cause for joy in this resemblance to our King? The Church says: '*Sacrifice!*' and then, lest we should be mistaken in our choice of victim, adds: 'Offer a sacrifice of justice,' as who should say: 'Keep holiness and offer up pure hearts perpetually to God.'"[1]

Another voice of unmistakable authority is added to our sum of testimony by S Gregory the Great, the illustrious occupier of S Peter's Chair from A.D. 590 to A.D. 604. "When we are celebrating the Mysteries of the Passion," says the saintly Pontiff, "we must reproduce within ourselves that thing which we are outwardly performing, for *Jesus is not truly and effectually a Victim for our sakes before his Father except when, one with his intentions, we, too, present ourselves as victims.*" Expanding this idea, the great Pope adds these words: "*I say with confidence that, after death, we shall require no more a Saving Victim, if, during life, we have been truly victims before God.*"[2] In face of such authoritative testimony all discussion is impossible. We must, with Jesus, become victims offered to the Father.

But we can quote still further evidence. S Bruno, Bishop of Segni and Abbot of Monte Cassino, in the twelfth century, commenting on Leviticus, recalls the saying of S Paul: "Your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost,"[3] reaching this logical conclusion: "If we ourselves are verily God's temples, let us make search within ourselves for priest and altar whereupon the holocaust shall be consumed. *The*

[1] *Expositio in Psalterium,* Ps. iv, *P.L.,* tom. LXX, col. 50.
[2] Bossuet, *Ier Sermon pour la Purification de la sainte Vièrge.*
[3] Bossuet, *Méditation sur l'Evangile. La Cène,* IIme partie 56e jour.

altar is our heart; the priest, our will; the fire to burn the sacrifice, the love with which our heart is glowing. But, just as in the ancient law, it was commanded that the holocaust should burn all night, so, in like manner, *our sacrifice must burn and must endure all through our life.*"[1]

And lastly, Bossuet, re-echoing all these sayings, sums up the witness of Tradition in the following words: " 'A faithful saying,' writes the holy Apostle, 'and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,'[2] and that, to be the Saviour of the human race, he willed to be its Victim. But such is the consummate solidarity of the Mystical Body that, as the Head has sacrificed himself, *so must the members, too, be living victims;* this is why S Augustine says that, in the sacrifice she offers every day, the *Catholic Church* perceives how *she too must be offered with her Victim, Jesus Christ,* because, according to his dispensation, no soul can be partaker in his Sacrifice unless self-consecrated, in and through him, to become a pleasing sacrifice."[3] Elsewhere the famous Bishop utters this same thought again in speaking of the Saviour's spirit of sacrifice: "*Let us, then, take unto ourselves this victim spirit.* If Jesus immolates himself for us, *we, too, must offer ourselves with him.* For so we shall be sacrificed indeed, and God will give us Jesus as our wisdom and our righteousness, our sanctification and redemption."[4]

Then, coming to the dispositions necessary for the victim life, the illustrious writer uses the idea put

[1] *Imitation,* bk. IV, ch. vii, 3. [2] 1 Tim. i. 15.
[3] *De Decalogo,* lib. IV, lix, *P.L.,* tom. LXXVII, col. 428.
[4] 1 Cor. iii, 17.

forward by the author of the *Imitation: "Present yourselves with perfect resignation as a perpetual holocaust, offered upon the altar of your heart,"*[1] and ends devoutly: *"Imitating Jesus and in the victim spirit, let us be utterly abandoned to the Will of God, else can we have no portion in his Sacrifice. Even if we must needs be holocausts—victims consumed entirely by the flames—let us be burnt to ashes rather than oppose our wills to his.* I come, my God, to do, with Jesus Christ, your Will! Happy the life which ends with such an act. It *should begin* with the adoption of that attitude with Jesus Christ—at least, then, let us bring it to a close in being consumed and spent in doing the Will of God."[2]

So then Tradition, according to the Fathers and accredited writers of the Church, is wholly in agreement with the Scripture in teaching us that we are victims with the Saviour, and that, by force of meditating on his spirit of immolation, we must produce within ourselves the dispositions of his Soul throughout his Passion. Therefore it cannot be maintained that this great doctrine of the "victim soul" is something new, based on no sure theological foundations, and that, because of its alleged exaggerations, it is full of dangers. This doctrine, instinct with the very essence of the Christian Faith, proceeds directly from the Gospel. Expounded and upheld through all the centuries, if now, in these last days, it thrusts itself more markedly upon our notice, it is because of eager souls who long to follow it that they may drink more freely from the fountain-head of piety and holiness.

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[1] *Exp. in Levit., P.L.,* tom. LXXVII, col. 428.

[2] Bossuet, *Elévations sur les mystères,* XIIIe sem., 7e et 8e elévations.

Nothing accordingly remains for the complete substantiation of our thesis but the appeal to reason, whose answer will confirm what goes before and finally decide the question. To follow the procedure of the schools, we purpose to set forth the argument in syllogistic form, according to scholastic methods, proving in turn the major and minor premises in order to arrive at a conclusion which is unassailable. Here is the way in which, according to our mind, we can construct the syllogism.

"*By Baptism we enter Holy Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and become his Members, receiving*—ipso facto—*his life into ourselves; and consequently, that we may not fall away but may continue faithful to the spirit of the One who has begotten us, we must experience in ourselves the self-same sentiments, the self-same dispositions as were his, and must perform the self-same actions.*

"*Now the life, the sentiments, the dispositions, and the acts of Jesus were the life, the sentiments, the dispositions, and the actions of a Victim.*

"*Therefore our supernatural life will be a victim life; our sentiments, our dispositions, and our acts will be the sentiments, the dispositions, and the acts of victims.*"

Such is the argument. The form of syllogism being granted, if we succeed in proving both the major and the minor premises, we shall have proved the fact that every Christian is and ought to be a victim with the Christ.

Let us repeat the premises:

"*By Baptism we enter Holy Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and become his Members.*"

This first part of the major premise is evident to

us as soon as we have understood that Holy Church is nothing more nor less than the Mystical Body of Christ.

To prove it we need only quote the several passages from S Paul bearing upon Baptism and the tremendous doctrine of the Mystical Body. "*You are the body of Christ and you his members,*[1] *each with his own particular function,*" he writes to the Corinthians. He has explained already what is in his mind. "For as the body is one and hath many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptised *into one body,* whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and in one Spirit we have all been made to drink."[2] So then, in Baptism made one with Christ, we are, with him, incorporated in his Church.

The second portion of the major premise, "*Receiving,* ipso facto, *his life into ourselves,*" is quite as obvious as the first. The members being united to the head, the life subsisting in the head extends itself through all the members, to give them power and movement. That which is true upon the natural plane is also true upon the supernatural.

This supernatural life, bestowed in Baptism, transforms to such a marvellous degree, moreover, that the Apostle terms it "being born again." . . . "*Being born again,* not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever,"[3] writes S Peter. "Not by the works of justice which we have done," S Paul says, "but according to his mercy he saved us, *by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost,* whom

[1] 1 Cor. xii, 27. [2] 1 Cor. xii, 12, 13. [3] 1 Pet. i, 23.

he hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to hope of life everlasting."[1] So then, regenerated by Our Lord in Baptism, we are recipients of the life which is his life, and which should lead us on to life eternal.

As for the third part of the major premise, "*Consequently, that we may not fall away, but may continue faithful to the spirit of the One who has begotten us, we must experience in ourselves the selfsame sentiments, the selfsame dispositions as were his, and must perform the selfsame actions,*" it naturally emerges from the principles enunciated in the first and second sections of this major premise.

Just as the natural life is the interior source of action in this life, so must the supernatural life reveal itself in actions of this selfsame life. Having received, in Baptism, the life of Jesus Christ, we must throughout our life experience those selfsame sentiments, adopt those selfsame dispositions, perform those selfsame actions which were his. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit,"[2] says S Paul to the Galatians.

Elsewhere the same Apostle urges the adoption of the attitude of Jesus: *Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu*—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,"[3] he writes to the Philippians. His exhortation is his personal attitude of soul translated into words. So truly was he one with the Redeeming Christ that he desired to know no other love on earth. *Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos nisi Jesum Christum et hunc crucifixum*—"I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus

[1] Titus iii, 4-7. [2] Gal. v, 25. [3] Philipp. ii, 5.

Christ, and him crucified,"[1] he says to the Corinthians. And such is the intensity of his conviction in this matter that parallel expressions constantly confront us in his written message: *Mihi enim vivere Christus est*—"To me to live is Christ."[2] *Christo confixus sum cruci. Vivo autem, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus. Quod autem nunc vivo in carne, in fide vivo Filii Dei qui dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me*—"With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. And I live, *now not I, but Christ liveth in me.* And that I live now in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me."[3] We might proceed to criticise these texts in order to assimilate their teaching to the full, but as they stand they are sufficient to convince us that, following the example of the Apostle, we should be reproducing in ourselves the sentiments and dispositions of the Saviour's soul, that we, like him, may manifest the acts of victims in our lives.

To come to the minor premise: "*Now the life, the sentiments, the dispositions, and the acts of Jesus Christ were the life, the dispositions, and the actions of a Victim.*" It is superfluous to bring a rigorous test to bear upon this statement, since we have seen already, in the second chapter of the first part of this book, that Jesus was essentially a victim, and that continually, all through his life, he acted as a Victim. To quote, however, two new texts which manifest this truth: "(Christ), *who by the Holy Ghost offered himself* unspotted unto God."[4] So writes the Apostle to the Hebrews. "As Christ hath loved us and hath delivered himself for

[1] 1 Cor. ii, 2.
[2] Philipp. i, 21.
[3] Gal. ii, 20.
[4] Heb. ix, 14.

us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness,"[1] he says again to the Ephesians.

After such evidence as this no further witness can be needed.

Both premises of the present syllogism being admitted, the inference is obvious. And so, with perfect confidence, we say : "*Therefore our supernatural life will be a victim life; our sentiments, our dispositions, and our acts will be the sentiments, the dispositions, and the acts of victims.*"

Here, then, is shown the argument of reason, supporting and corroborating Scripture and Tradition. *By Baptism we are recipients of the life of Jesus. The life of Jesus is a victim life. With him we must be victims.*" This is the summary and conclusion of the thesis.

Accordingly it is admissible to assert that Christians who observe the laws of God and of the Church, thereby preserving in themselves the life of grace and so attaining to real union with the Victim Christ, are living, of a truth, the victim life, and do perform the acts essential to that life; but they are living it imperfectly unless they aim at its complete development. The generous Christian, on the other hand, striving to realise in his person the whole perfection of the Christian life, in closest union with the Crucified, tends to the fullest realisation of the victim life as it was lived by the Redeemer. In other words, each Christian is a victim by the very fact of being endowed with supernatural life, but does not realise the victim state till the completion of the spiritual life.

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[1] Eph. v, 2.

And so we have entirely proved the thesis set out at the beginning of this chapter—namely, that *The Christian life is also a victim life,* joined to that victim life of Jesus which was ended by his death upon the Cross. It seems impossible, in face of such a demonstration, that any should persist in their denial of its truth. If certain minds are frightened when the victim life is mentioned, then they are in the wrong. Their attitude proves all too clearly that they have not understood the very essence of the Christian Faith.

This brings us to the subject of those many priests, confessors and directors, who, for the past three centuries, have insisted on discouraging the use of S Teresa's writings by their flocks or by those souls whom they directed. Since the appearance of the heresy of Quietism, many hasten, on their own authority, to place all mystics on the index—true mystics with false—under the pretext that a certain type of mind might be misguided and deluded by their works. Most certainly the study of the mystics holds real dangers which cannot be ignored. The fact that light is blinding to the mole is no reason for concealing it beneath a bushel. Imprudent souls of small intelligence may go astray for want of understanding or of common sense, through constant study of such authors, but others can derive from them untold advantages, by being drawn thereby to higher stages of the spiritual life.

The same remarks are applicable to the question which we have in hand, and those who find in it a cause of apprehension are those who, for want of due reflection, have failed to see the problem's vast extent.

The lack of truly Christian characters in our day is commonly deplored. And is not the real reason for

this scarcity the failure to declare the doctrine that the victim spirit and devotion to the Cross are of the very essence of the Christian Faith? Yet, in a world athirst for pleasure and rapidly reverting to a state of paganism, there can be no salvation, whether individual, social, or international, apart from Jesus and from Jesus Crucified. S Paul, his co-Apostles, and the martyrs did not fear to preach the Cross; with them as our exemplars shall we not also preach the truth? For we are victims from the supernatural point of view, and to be perfect Christians we must realise within ourselves the victim state.

Nevertheless, we readily admit the danger there may be in canvassing the theme with all and sundry, in and out of season, without discrimination or clear purpose. The victim state cannot be personally realised without enlightenment and proper guidance. The need for due initiation is no adequate excuse, however, for the avoidance of a problem whose solution may procure immense advantages to souls and to the Church. We therefore have felt justified in making our attempt.

CHAPTER II

THE STATE AND FUNCTION OF THE VICTIM

THE expression "victim souls" should now have grown familiar, but in the minds of certain readers there may still exist some slight confusion as to its true significance, definite though this is.

It is maintained by some that there is a distinction between those souls with a particular devotion to the Most Holy Sacrament—whom they therefore class as "Eucharistic victims"—and those whose special thirst for sacrifice has made the Passion of the Crucified their centre of devotion, and who are thence entitled "victims of the Cross."

In our opinion these distinctions have no theological foundation, and we for our part count the terms synonymous.

Doubtless there may be victims with a special dedication to our Lord in his capacities as Host and Victim, envisaging him either in his Passion or in the Eucharist; just as there may be victims exclusively of adoration and of praise, of supplication, or of reparation and atonement; but we have said that we intend to view the victim state in all its wider bearings, having a due regard to the four ends of sacrifice.

First, then, there is no real distinction between the Victim Jesus in the Eucharist and in the Passion. In both the Victim Being is in every way the same, because the Eucharistic Sacrifice is nothing but the mystic representation of the Sacrifice of Calvary. It is

not necessary, then, to differentiate between the victims who devote themselves to him beneath this aspect or the other, when, theologically, they are expressions of the same supernatural fact.

Whatever words may be employed to indicate the victim state, the fact remains, as we have seen, that from the Christian point of view the state itself consists in being one with Jesus in his immolation, in order to perpetuate his Sacrifice on earth, in every age. It follows that the victim soul must reproduce the state, the thoughts, the sentiments, the attitude of Jesus on the Cross; she must abandon, sacrifice, and immolate herself as he did all his life, for the procuring of his Father's glory and for the salvation of men's souls, and must not—as some wrongly think she should—take up some purely sentimental attitude of soul, in the deluded hope of building for herself an artificial system of psychology without a basis of theology.

In dealing with a problem so delicate as this, it is essential to regard its whole perspective, not dwelling upon details which might prove bewildering to certain minds, but trying to preserve a width and range of outlook which may help us, if the feat be possible, to sound the deeps of everlasting truth.

Briefly summed up, the issue is as follows: The Sacrifice of Christ must be extended through the ages by spiritual victims in his Mystical Body; hence to be victim is to be united to the prayer and suffering of the Saviour in his grievous Martyrdom, letting the soul become transformed, in him and by him, so that it exists no longer save as a victim offered, like Jesus, to the Father, in a supernatural holocaust.

Thus, then, the victim soul, to follow her vocation,

must join herself to Jesus on the Cross. And further, since the sacrifice of the Mass is but the representation of the Sacrifice of Calvary, she may unite herself with Jesus-Victim in his daily immolation of himself, in mystic manner, on the Catholic Altar. But let her avoid attributing to Jesus, hidden beneath the sacramental species, sentiments more or less imaginary. Some spiritual writers err so far, indeed, as to suggest conjectural humiliations of the Eucharistic Victim for imitation by the faithful. His silence in the face of sacrilege, his self-abandonment in human hands, his stripping off of earthly goods, his being imprisoned in the Tabernacle, his exile from his Heavenly Home, as if he were diminished in the Host and lowered to some sort of impotence or some inferior state proportioned to the littleness of the Eucharistic bread. These are eccentric, private suppositions and out of harmony with pure traditional teaching. According to S Thomas and the greater theologians, Our Lord is just as glorious in the Eucharist as he is in Heaven. He still is Victim, as on Calvary, but he no longer suffers and can feel no pain from our affronts. His glory may be struck at and his love rejected, so that, in this sense, he is able, in his revelations, to complain of the ingratitude of men, but Personally he remains impassible. Therefore, in order to arrive at a more thorough understanding of the victim state, we must consider it in Jesus, not only in the Eucharist, but chiefly in his Sacrifice on Golgotha.

And at the outset, to avoid all possible confusion, let us now once for all establish a distinction between the "victim state" and "the attitude of the victim soul." The expression "victim state" has reference

to the four great ends of sacrifice, while, on the other hand, the "attitude of the victim soul" refers to those supernatural dispositions which we intend to study later, in the third part of this work. In order, therefore, to secure methodical treatment of the subject, there will be, here, no question of ascetical considerations, but only of dogmatic facts.

What is it that Our Lord does in his Martyrdom? True Lamb of God, he lets himself be immolated like the Old Testament victims, offering the sacrifice of all his being for the Almighty's glory.

His Sacrifice, in truth, the crowning and perfection of all sacrifices, is, in exalted measure, latreutic or of adoration, eucharistic or of thanksgiving, impetrative or of petition, reparative or of atonement. It is latreutic, since the most perfect adoration due to God is manifested in the death of Jesus; and it is eucharistic, for, because in thanksgiving the gratitude must be commensurate with benefits received, the Sacrifice of Calvary, none other than the God-man's offering of himself, is perfect compensation, through its infinite worth, for all the favours granted by the Almighty; it is impetrative, since Jesus Crucified restores to us, by immolation of himself, the gifts of grace and glory lost by Adam, and wins for us the aids of which we stand in need; and, lastly, it is reparative, since it is simultaneously *propitiatory,* appeasing the Almighty's anger after the primal sin; *expiatory,* disposing God to pardon the offence against his majesty, and *satisfactory,* as expiating and discharging the original debt incurred towards the Heavenly justice.

The victim state of Jesus upon Calvary is, then, a state of adoration and of thanksgiving, of supplica-

tion and of expiation. Accordingly the state of victim souls must also be a state which is latreutic, eucharistic, impetrative, and satisfactory, lived out in piety and suffering. For all the spiritual victims of the Mystical Body of Christ must personally reproduce that selfsame state which was the state of the Redeemer on the Cross, all victims being bound to yield themselves for immolation in a spirit of prayer and sacrifice and for the glory of God.

It may be readily believed that such a state as this will bring inevitable suffering in its train, and it would be mistaken to suppose that only victims of atonement need live a life of suffering. All victims—whether of adoration and of praise, of thanksgiving or of supplication — must needs be immolated, and pain must necessarily be involved in immolation. And further, as the sacrifice is consummated by the holocaust, so in like manner must the victim be consumed, no longer, it is true, by means of a material fire such as destroyed the common victims of the Ancient Covenant, but by the spiritual flame of love, so that the victim life may truly be described as being a life of love and suffering realised in sacrifice.

A life of love and suffering realised in sacrifice! What wonder that this victim state fills timid souls with fear, and that those Christians who attain to its full realisation are so few. Nevertheless, forbidding though this vista of perpetual immolation may appear to certain minds, there are some fervent souls who—to their honour be it said—find fascination in the prospect, and, prompted by the Holy Spirit, advance towards this lofty state with generous ardour.

A mystery indeed (though rational enough when

looked at from the spiritual point of view) that souls, not always with an understanding of themselves, should tend by instinct to the Tabernacle and the Cross! As Jesus, since his glorious Resurrection, suffers no more, and as the Sacrifice of Calvary renews itself each day upon the Catholic Altar, these souls approach the Sacrifice of the Mass to offer up their sufferings, in order to prolong Christ's Passion in the world. In mystic manner, at the Offertory, they place themselves upon the paten with the Eucharistic bread and with the wine and water in the chalice. When, at the Consecration, the Sacred Host and Precious Blood are elevated by the priest, then, like the Heavenly Victim, they present themselves to the Almighty. At the moment of Communion they unite themselves with the Redeeming Christ, and this not only in Communion of a sanctifying nature—as the reception of the Holy Eucharist is sometimes (wrongly) held exclusively to be—but also in communion of an immolating character, incorporating them with Jesus Crucified in his Eternal Sacrifice, and changing them to hosts united with the one Great Host of Calvary.[1]

All these ideas might be extensively developed in a description of the beauty of the victim state, but if our treatise is, for the moment, to remain exclusively

[1] On the subject of "communion of immolation" we recommend the study of the chapter bearing that title in *Le Sacerdoce et le Sacrifice de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, by Grimal, S.M. (Beauchesne). The fundamental theme is this: that, "In the Eucharist, Jesus renews the Sacrifice of the Cross in order to incorporate us in his Death, by giving us communion from the Host, which is the Bread of life eternal and divine *only so far* as it accomplishes in us that immolation previously begun in us by faith and Baptism." This is the Pauline theory following on the conception of S John.

dogmatic, we must refrain, at present, from considerations of a mystical nature.

There is no question, nevertheless, about the beauty of the "victim soul" which, having solved the mystery of man's existence and perceived the Christian Faith's profundity, has no ambition save to scorn the things of earth and follow Jesus on the way to Calvary, in order to become, with him, a sacrifice presented to the Father. She realises thus the very highest state which can be reached on earth and, through it, attains the loftiest expression of the virtue of religion, whose end is the Creator's glory.

The foregoing considerations have brought us to the following conclusion: that the victim state is in its essence a state of adoration, of thanksgiving, of supplication, of atonement, lived in prayer and suffering, giving the soul by whom it is embraced, in imitation of Jesus dying upon Calvary, the joy of offering herself to be consumed in flames of Heavenly charity, as a supernatural holocaust.

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If we would try to learn the full effectiveness of the victim state—in other words, to comprehend its function and the part it ought to play—we must once more return to Jesus offering his Sacrifice.

To what end does he immolate himself on Calvary? We answer: To procure God's glory and obtain the world's salvation.

It has been shown already[1] how the Redeeming Christ attained this double end, and in what way his Sacrifice procured God's glory, while, in magnificent fashion, making satisfaction for original sin.

It is, accordingly, unnecessary to revert to this

[1] Part I, Chapter II.

particular aspect of the subject. Let it suffice that we apply its teaching to our spiritual victims, who by their self-incorporation with the Redeeming Christ, acquire the selfsame supernatural fruitfulness.

And any undue stretching of the point to reach extreme conclusions must carefully be avoided. For it is not our purpose, in considering this question, to formulate new teaching, but rather, within the limits of a prudent moderation, to investigate a viewpoint hitherto left almost unexplored.

Further, Père Hugon, in his work upon the mystery of Redemption, has wisely noted that the death of Jesus is alone in being a true sacrifice, and that the death of martyrs, all their glory notwithstanding, is not deserving of this title. "The marytrs were not consecrated priests," he says, "in order that they might officially offer themselves in immolation for the honour of God, whereas Our Lord, appointed Pontiff and, by Divine authority, the representative of men, *did* offer himself in very deed as Victim." "The martyrdom of Saints is not a sacrifice," he adds, "even though reaching to the highest point of heroism."[1]

So we must guard against extravagance, and must avoid being led away by dangerous conjectures. The Saints and Martyrs, properly speaking, are not genuine victims, for they, to use the language of philosophy, are only victims in a metaphorical sense, and not according to the "substantial" meaning of of the term. The selfsame truth applies to Mary, designated "Virgin-Priest." She is priest, not in the sacramental or substantial meaning of the word, but in a sense which is both metaphorical and mystical.

[1] Hugon, *Mystère de la Rédemption*, p. 136.

Yet the same author, dealing further with this question, observes that this expression "metaphorical" does not exclude a deep reality of meaning, but merely designates the one particular aspect of the subject which, for the moment, is to be considered. He gives the following comparison to make his meaning clear. "The spiritual marriage between souls and God," he says, "is mystical and metaphorical compared with natural and with sacramental marriage, but it implies a noble and complete *reality,* though of a different kind, because the union of the spirit is to an infinite degree more perfect and more intimate than any union rising out of earthly nuptials. *Qui adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est*[1]—'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit' with him, to the extent of sharing in his thoughts, his wishes, and his sentiments. . . . It is obvious, then, that the figurative sense may sometimes stand for loftiest excellencies and sublime realities—equally with the literal meaning and even in a higher measure."[2]

And so it is with "victim souls." Victims they are, but only by their union with the One Great Victim in his Mystical Body, and it is thus that we are justified in stating that, regarded in this light, they do indeed procure the glory of God.

There is nothing, then, surprising in the fact that all these "living victims, holy and pleasing unto God,"[3] should take delight in offering themselves, each one according to his own vocation and particular attraction, to different perfections of Almighty God,[4]

[1] 1 Cor. vi, 17.
[2] P. Hugon, *La Vierge-Prêtre,* pp. 20-21.
[3] Rom. xii, 1.
[4] The attributes of God are generally assumed as numbering ten. Five of these attributes are negative, setting aside those im-

Thus S Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face offered herself as victim to the compassionate love of God, and Gemma Galgani to his justice.

Here we may be permitted a simple observation. It clearly is allowable, in prayer and sacrifice, to specify the end for which the prayer and sacrifice are offered, and to designate the attribute of God towards which both immolation and petition are directed. Instead, however, of, as it were, partitioning God, by choosing only one of his perfections, might it not be more fitting to make our self-oblation to his unity? Thus, having formulated one or two intentions of a purely general nature, we leave him free to allot our sum of merits as seems good to him, without endeavouring to impose our wills upon him, so to speak. We merely recommend the question to our readers' notice, without attempting to supply the answer. . . .

We have no wish to linger over what are purely speculative considerations. If "victim souls" succeed in rendering glory to God, they equally fulfil a second function, accomplishing, with Jesus, the salvation of men's souls.

And here again it is important not to be misled, for though the sacrifice of "victim souls" is a true sacrifice in a *metaphorical* sense, it must not be forgotten that this sacrifice has, in itself, no sanctifying virtue. Resembling sacraments in having its expression

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perfections which are incompatible with the Essence of God. These are: simplicity, in opposition to diversity; changelessness, opposed to mutability; eternity, to transience; immensity, to measurability; infinity, to limitation. The other five are, on the contrary, positive, affirming the divine perfections: wisdom, power, holiness, goodness or mercy, and justice. It is to the last two, mercy and justice, that victim souls most commonly offer themselves.

through a visible sign, it differs from them widely in the following respects. Sacrifice has for its primary end the worship offered to God, and witnesses to our subjection with regard to him, whereas the function of a sacrament is man's sanctification, and it becomes the sign of grace descending upon souls. Secondly, sacrifice is, in a sense, a formal challenge addressed to God, calling on him to grant his grace to men and to apply to them the satisfactions and the merits of his Son, whereas a sacrament produces grace *ex opere operato,* and it obtains its efficacy from the moment of the rite's performance. In other words, a sacrifice is beneficial to the multitude for whom it has been offered, whereas a sacrament is only profitable to the faithful soul by whom it is received.

Therefore we shall do well to note once more that "victim souls" derive their supernatural fruitfulness only by virtue of their union with the Redeeming Christ.

To gain a clear perspective of the whole expanse of this great problem, it would be necessary to enlarge upon the dogma of the Communion of Saints in its connection with the theology of merit. But this would mean departing from the lines laid down for this particular study; and so, without pretending to exhaust the subject, we content ourselves with several observations which may throw a further light upon the question.

All Christians in a state of grace are joined to Christ, and, through this union with him in the Mystical Body, are capable of performing actions having threefold value: the value of merit, which brings them an increase of supernatural life; impetrative value, giving the right to fresh provision of effec-

tive grace; and an atoning value, which remits the temporal penalties due to them for pardoned sin.

Both prayer and sacrifice possess this triple value, but let it be observed that impetration and atonement themselves depend on merit, for impetration *merits* to be heard because of supplication, and satisfaction *merits* to be accepted as reparation for the insult offered to God.

These theories, nevertheless, must be most carefully distinguished. Merit is principally a right to recompense, and impetration is a craving of new graces, while satisfaction is an expiation of transgression. It may perhaps simplify matters to consider merit alone.

And what is merit? From the natural point of view it is the characteristic of free action rendering good deeds worthy of reward, and, from the supernatural standpoint, it is the resultant of a good and supernatural work performed for God, giving a right to supernatural recompense.

The theologians recognise two kinds of merit: that which is known as *de condigno,* existing when the work is truly worthy of reward—that is to say, when there exists between it and the recompense such measure of equivalence or proportion that reward is due in justice, and merit called *de congruo,* founded, not on the strictest claims of justice, but rather upon certain moral exigencies which the Compassionate Rewarder never fails to satisfy.[1]

[1] Some theologians have explained the difference between the types of merit by giving the example of a soldier whose conduct has been admirable in the field. He merits *de condigno* the pay which is his due for service rendered, and *de congruo* an honorary gratuitous reward for gallantry in face of danger. The first is due in justice, the latter simply from a sense of what is fitting.

In addition to the above distinction it is well to call to mind that good works, in order to be meritorious, must be dependent upon certain well-defined conditions. The person who performs them must be still on earth, and in a state of grace; the work must be accomplished freely, and be suitable and supernatural; and, on the part of God, the recompense must be established upon promise. For no works of ours can give us any claim at all upon the heritage of God save where he has ordained them for that end and promised to reward them.

By our good works, then, we may merit grace and glory; but for ourselves we merit them *de condigno*, and for others *de congruo*. It is in this latter way that "victim souls" may labour for the sanctifying of others. They cannot save these other souls directly —as by right—but indirectly and *de congruo*, through forming part, with them, of the Mystical Body of Christ. All Christian souls, indeed, made one with Christ by grace, compose, in him, one single Body. As, in the human frame, the vigour of one member contributes to the well-being of the rest, so in the Mystical Body of Christ each Christian benefits his brethren by his own particular merits.

But here again the Communion of Saints is subjected to certain definite conditions, existing only between saints and not between the righteous and the sinner.

Nevertheless it must not be supposed that sinners can derive no profit from the good works of the righteous, for though the supernatural life is circulated first and foremost through the "saints," it yet allows to those not in a state of grace the possibility of succour.

Here is the process by whose means this wonderful exchange may be effected. First, the elect present to God the merits of their lives and, interceding for their brethren in the Church militant, draw down upon them actual graces. The righteous of the earth present their satisfactions for the souls in Purgatory, or offer their good works for those who, in a state of grace, still share with them the journey Heavenwards. The souls in Purgatory offer supplications for their benefactors, causing actual graces or succour of a purely preternatural nature to descend upon them.

And, though the sinner is excluded from the Communion of Saints, he can profit, notwithstanding, by the merits of such souls as are in a state of grace. Indeed, the overflowing life in righteous souls comes, as it were, to entreat the sinner from without, endeavouring to revive in him the dormant germs of supernatural life. These tentative attempts at spiritual resurrection are the effective graces which they may employ as means to their conversion.

Regarded thus, the function of the victim soul becomes more explicable. In imitation of her Master and in fervent love, she gives her life for the salvation of the world. Nevertheless, in her humility, confessing that her prayer and immolation have no value save in their union with the Saviour's Sacrifice, she comes to place herself upon the Altar, close to Jesus, co-operating with him in his labour of redemption.

Moreover, in the course of history, even before the coming of our Lord to earth, we may discover proofs of supernatural fruitfulness in souls through prayer and sacrifice.

The colloquy of Abraham with God before the gates of Sodom is proof that Yahweh would have

granted pardon to the guilty city if he had found in her a few just persons fit to turn away his wrath.[1] And several times his people won forgiveness through Moses'[2] intercession. We find a similar instance in the story of Job's friends, who, after their offence, obtained their pardon only through the intervention of God's servant.[3] S Paul, in his epistles, also asks the faithful for their prayers, and binds himself to bear them constantly in mind before Almighty God, because of his belief that supplications offered by the few are profitable to the rest, and, in accordance with the law of the reversibility of grace, return in showers of blessing on the whole community.

The realm of souls has parallel results produced in it by suffering. It is a commonplace to quote the saying that the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity, and do we not over and over again encounter, through the ages, typical cases manifesting supernatural fruitfulness? It is S Stephen, sinking beneath the stoning of his enemies, who conquers Saul and wins him for the primitive Church; Saul, who, once persecutor, speedily becomes the resolute Apostle; S Paul himself, who, after his conversion, confesses that he suffers, for the faithful whom he longs to win for God, the bitter pangs of spiritual childbirth; S Monica, who, by her tears and anguish, gains conversion for her husband and her son. The lives of God's devoted servants show a multitude of similar examples of loving substitution, revealing, in addition to the heroism of their charity, the fruitfulness of pain. The innocent present themselves in place of

[1] Gen. xviii, 32.
[2] Ex. xxxii, 11-15, xxxiii, 17.
[3] Job xlii, 8.

guilty souls: forthwith God strikes the innocent, while he forgives the sinner. So "victim souls" can reproduce the selfsame gesture, in the dedication of themselves, by lives of prayer and suffering, to the achieving of the world's salvation.

It must not be supposed that cases such as these are rare, or that they may be met with only in the ranks of canonised Saints. The world has many victims, and might have many more, if only the most elementary initiation in the love of the Cross were given to the faithful. So much good will, indeed, appears in certain souls that, given a supernatural education, they might be very rapidly conducted to the highest summits of the spiritual life.

This victim life has found a wonderful interpreter in S Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, who, in a few brief lines, has shown to us her mind: "In order to love Jesus and be victims of his love, the weaker and more wretched that we are, the better are we fitted for the operations of consuming and transforming love. . . . The mere desire to be a victim is enough; but there must be consent to constant poverty and lack of strength, and here comes in the stumbling-block, for where, in this world, are the truly poor in spirit to be found? 'The man that is poor of spirit indeed, must be sought afar and from the ends of the earth,' says the writer of the *Imitation*.[1] He does not counsel us to search amongst the great of soul, but to 'seek afar'—that is to say, in lowliness and nothingness. . . . Ah, let us keep 'afar' from show and ostentation, be glad to love our littleness, our lack of feeling; and then, when we are truly poor in spirit, Jesus will come to seek for

[1] *Imit.*, bk. II, ch. ix, 4.

us, however far we be, and we shall be transformed in flames of love! . . ."[1]

But S Thérèse points out to us, as well, that victim lives demand great courage and a perfect immolation:

"To be in very truth love's victim," she remarks elsewhere, "involves a total self-surrender. For love consumes the victim only in so far as he completely yields himself to love."[2]

What, then, more natural than that S Thérèse, with her particular devotion to the victim life, should triumph in that life herself, and long to see a following of multitudes of souls who, like herself, should immolate themselves upon love's altar?

In this connection we will quote the prayer addressed to Jesus, Victim and her Heavenly Spouse, towards the ending of her life on earth. She speaks to him in his capacity as Victim, and begs him to provide a multitude of victims for himself.

"O Word of God, my Saviour!" she writes, "thou art the Heavenly Eagle whom I love and to whom my soul is irresistibly attracted. . . . Thou, stooping to this land of exile, didst elect to suffer and to die that so thou mightest take all souls and plunge them in the Holy Trinity, eternal furnace of undying love! Thou, mounting once again towards the unapproachable light, didst yet remain a dweller in our vale of tears, hidden beneath the semblance of a pure white Host, and this to nourish me with thine own substance. . . .

"Ah! what sublime and reckless follies have the Saints performed for thee! they dared great things because they, too, were 'eagles'! But I am much too

[1] Sixth letter to Sr. Marie du Sacré-Cœur.
[2] *Conseils et Souvenirs.*

little for the doing of great deeds. *My* folly lies in hoping that thy love accepts me as a *victim; my* folly is to count upon the Angels and the Saints to help me fly to thee with thine own wings, Beloved Eagle! There, for as long as thou wilt suffer me, I will remain to gaze on thee, longing to be a captive fascinated by thy Heavenly glance, to be the prey of Love. I pray that thou wilt one day stoop to me and bear me swiftly up into the furnace of thy love and there submerge me in the fiery deeps, to be for evermore a happy victim.

"O Jesus! if I could tell all 'little souls' of thine ineffable condescension! . . . But why should I be anxious to make known the secrets of thy love, O my Beloved? Thou only hast imparted them to me, and canst not thou reveal them equally to others? I know thou canst, and beg this boon of thee: I pray thee to let fall thy Heavenly glance on countless 'little souls,' entreating thee to choose from out the world a host of Little Victims worthy of thy love!"

Her prayer is answered, since on every side is seen a marvellous profusion of vocations to the victim life, in souls who, like herself and following Jesus, offer themselves to God as willing holocausts. Thus they contribute in their victim-state and function to God's glory and the saving of men's souls, until that day when, in the light of Heaven's glory, the Love Divine shall totally consume them, one with the Mighty Victim in the consummation of his Everlasting Sacrifice.

CHAPTER III

THE APPROACHES TO THE VICTIM STATE

THE victim state is one of the loftiest levels of the spiritual life, demanding for its realisation intimate and continuous union with the Redeeming Christ in his Great Sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and atonement. As we have seen already, it is a state of suffering and love.

In the foregoing chapter we examined it from the doctrinal point of view and all considerations of a moral nature were reserved for later study. We now proceed to contemplate the thoughts, the sentiments and virtues by which a state of such exalted spiritual eminence must be accompanied.

This victim life, because of all the suffering it involves, demands both intellectual and moral initiation—together with a thorough supernatural training. None but the foolhardy would attempt the victim state while still in the early stages of the spiritual life, or would advance in it without sufficient preparation. The dread which is awakened by the problem in some souls is perfectly comprehensible. Nevertheless, the difficulties need not be exaggerated to the point of making it appear impossible to realise the state in practice. We are at one with those who fully recognise the dangers which beset the way, and point them out ourselves in order to save souls from grave mistakes and disillusionments. But we believe that, diffi-

culties notwithstanding, the summit of the ascent is perfectly attainable.

No mariner abandons all his voyaging because he knows the seas are strewn with wrecks, for that would be to own himself unreasonably faint-hearted. He has but to shape his course by rules which his forerunners have laid down for him, if he would navigate the seas in safety.

The same is applicable to the victim life. To realise it fully, souls need only reproduce the actions of their prototypes, and so for their information we here indicate the path which leads to final consummation.

They may, if they will, take Christopher Columbus as a model, and note how he encountered many obstacles before he ultimately reached his great discovery by force of patience and of dogged will.

* * * * *

It has to be acknowledged, then, that dangers do surround the approaches to the victim state. But—and let this be clearly understood—they rise, not from the victim state itself, but from a false interpretation of its doctrine, or, still more often, from the lamentable lack of balance with which some souls approach the proposition.

There is perhaps no principle of theology of more importance for the sanctification of souls than that of grace, and yet it probably gathers round it, more than any other, the most pernicious errors. With due allowance made, the same remarks are applicable to the question which now occupies our notice. Some minds, devoid of moderation or of proper prudence, may wander from the truth concerning it, but others reap enormous benefits from the advantages it offers them for the development and perfection of their

supernatural life. It will be well, in consequence, to specify the various pitfalls into which the too impetuous soul may stumble, for the troubles chiefly come, not from excess of diffidence, but from too great presumption in advancing over this most difficult ground.

First, then, we must condemn those who stray into the way imprudently, failing to grasp the difficulty of the problem, with all its finer shades of meaning. Puffed up with pride, they fancy that all things are possible to them in the supernatural order, whereas, in practice, they are totally incapable of any lasting effort in the exercise of virtue. They hear descriptions of the victim life and wish to mount to Calvary with Jesus. But let the smallest difficulty cross their path, and after the example of S Peter, who had sworn to follow Jesus even unto death, they falter and turn back, defeated by the least demand for sacrifice. How much more laudable if, instead of yearning for the victim state and dallying with heroics, they were to practise the essential duties of the Christian life before aspiring to a premature attainment of the spiritual summits.

Then there are others duped by their imagination who, though filled with excellent intentions, decline finally into a state of apathy and illusion. The splendour of the victim's ideal appeals to them and causes them to vow themselves to it without authority from their director. But once the act of immolation has been made, they sink into a kind of fatalistic lethargy, effecting a paralysis of the supernatural life. They have become entirely passive—whereas the victim life is ever active—and end by needlessly creating for themselves a host of obstacles which they feel power-

less to surmount. Finding retreat compulsory, they are obliged to seek relief from burdens self-imposed upon their feeble shoulders, and forced to crave a dispensation from the vow embarked upon without consideration or advice.

Again, there are souls who, short of actually engaging in a vow, offer themselves as victims, and in consequence anticipate ordeals which, most happily for them, do not materialise, for God, more wise than they, deigns in his clemency to spare their weakness. Sometimes, however, as a spur to true reflection, he sends them suffering of a crucifying nature, and only then do the realities accompanying victim life come home to them in all their painfulness, no less than the wise precautions which must needs prepare their way.

It may be hardly necessary to add that there are souls desiring to embrace the victim life from no supernatural motive, but simply in the spirit of the dilettante or from a craving for excesses. The mere expression "victim" is not displeasing in itself to one desirous to be singular, and it is common, therefore, to encounter Christians who expatiate most freely on the subject without the slightest understanding of its meaning, the victim state, for them, consisting in a flood of talk producing little in the way of supernatural fruits. True victims are more modest, keeping silence on the subject of their spiritual state and jealously concealing the beauty of their soul and all the immolations of their life of sacrifice.

And lastly, in this age of sickly sensibility, cases of neurasthenia are not rare, where souls attempt to lead the victim life from a sheer love of suffering. This, surely, is a grave misunderstanding of the

Christian life, which, while demanding love of sacrifice, does not exalt pain to a sort of deity to which all else is immolated. Doubtless S Paul preached Jesus Crucified, but yet we never find him dwelling solely on this aspect of the Saviour's life, for, in his eyes, the shameful Death of the Redeemer was but the prelude to his glorious Resurrection. Therefore, if we would follow Jesus on the road to Calvary, let it be called to mind that in the end the road will lead to everlasting joys. For suffering is a means and not an end. It must be sought and cherished for the sake of its supernatural fruitfulness and not because it satisfies the morbid cravings of unhealthy temperaments which cannot live without it.

Hence all these errors have their root, not in the victim life itself, but in the insolent pride, inflamed imagination or excessive sensibility of souls who, thanks to their extravagance, are doomed from the very outset to complete sterility in ways of piety. Moreover, all these pitfalls may be recognised by means of an infallible sign. Their practice is to draw the faithful from the duties of their state and set them seeking hypothetical pains, having but little kinship with the ordinary conditions of the spiritual life. Instead of yearning after grievous sufferings belonging to a future more or less remote, and manifesting plentiful good will in their pursuit, the better course for souls would be the acceptance of their present tribulations with entire submission to the Will of God.

All these departures, by the way, are frequently the outcome of devotional reading only partly understood, and where the reader's interest has been captured more by abnormal attributes of sainthood than by its

own essential element, the supernatural life. The victim state is nothing less, indeed, than the perfection of the Christian life, insisting first of all on the abandonment of sin, the practising of virtues, obedience to God's laws and the commandments of the Church, and that the soul should faithfully perform the duties of her state. Not till this programme has been fully carried out can there be any aspirations after loftier states, for everything depends upon the moral and supernatural life. Unless the groundwork is secure, the superstructure cannot stand, and, far from towering to the heights of sanctity, will fall in utter ruin.

If we would realise the victim state in all its beauty, we cannot possibly do better than behold it in the Person of that Heavenly Pattern who so well knew how to live it. Mark, then, the thoughts, the sentiments and virtues of the Master, and contemplate his holy soul through his earthly life, and chiefly in the sorrowful hours of his most holy Passion.

* * * * *

Before we set ourselves to contemplate the Saviour's sanctity, a clear distinction must be drawn between his pure Humanity and his Divinity. As God he is *ipso facto* holy, as are the Father and the Spirit, but that is not the sanctity in question, for that, for us, is wholly inaccessible. His human sanctity alone is what concerns us now.

This human sanctity may be examined in either of two ways: from the theological or dogmatic point of view, establishing the characteristics of the Saviour's Person, whether or no we are capable of reproducing them ourselves—(for here again there is a special sanctity pertaining to Our Lord's Humanity, deriving

from the hypostatic union, and therefore unattainable for us)—and (2) from the practical or psychological aspect, exhibiting the thoughts and sentiments and virtues of the Redeemer and urging us to imitate him in his moral and supernatural life. A rapid glance will be sufficient for the theoretical aspect of the question, the practical point of view requiring a more thorough scrutiny.

The theologians, treating of the sanctity of Jesus, distinguish yet again between the negative holiness which kept him free from evil, and the positive sanctity uniting him immediately with God.

In Jesus negative sanctity consisted of impeccability, accompanied by complete immunity from sin, concupiscence, and imperfection. In fact, Our Lord's Humanity, united as it was to his Divinity, could not have sinned without self-contradiction; the character of his redeeming mission requiring that he should be stainless, and his enjoyment of the Beatific Vision preventing him from turning from the Creator.

He could not sin, and it is undeniable that he was faultless. Conceived immaculately, he was free from the original taint of sin. Completely master of himself and perfectly consistent, he stood so unmistakably removed from every personal transgression that watchful adversaries, ever spying on his conduct, failed to detect the slightest spot upon his honour. "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"[1] he asked the multitude, thus solemnly proclaiming his surpassing sanctity before the world.

As for his positive holiness, it was to be found in the assemblage and harmonious growth of all the elements of supernatural life. Jesus was gifted, first

[1] Matt. v, 17.

of all, with what the theologians call "the grace of union," a personal prerogative arising from his hypostatic union. He further was endued with sanctifying grace in absolute fulness, and was adorned with marvellous excellence of virtues. He was possessed of every infused virtue, excepting faith and hope (as contrary to his Beatific Vision), repentance, and, in its strictest meaning, continence, virtues repugnant to the hypostatic union. And lastly, he received the actual graces for the actions of his life, together with a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit's gifts.

To all these graces appertaining to the province of the supernatural life must be subjoined the *charismata* or extraordinary graces, known to theologians as graces *gratis datae*, such as the gifts of miracles and prophecy, neither of which are, properly speaking, constituent elements of the saintly life, but which God grants his servants to enlarge their sphere of action and extend their influence with souls.

On close inspection it would seem impossible that we should ever rise to such surprising sanctity. Never can we attain to sinlessness, nor to exemption from ill-doing, concupiscence and imperfection. Nor can we ever possess the "grace of union" with the whole plentitude of sanctifying grace, and therefore, in this sense, we cannot say that "victim souls," in order to respond to their vocation, must be "*identified*" with the Redeeming Christ, for that implies a perfect and exact similitude. In spite of this the word is frequently employed by many writers heedless of its implications. Must they, for this, be treated as offenders, accused of heresy, and have their spiritual life accounted an illusion? Most certainly not. This term, to them, denotes their union with the Redeeming

Christ, or their desire to copy him in everything wherein he may be imitated. But if their piety would be supported theologically, the nice distinction should be pointed out to them.

Admitting that perfection such as this is unattainable, it must not be forgotten, on the other hand, that with the help of God, a relative—if not an absolute—fulness of the supernatural life may be achieved by means of a progressive growth in sanctifying grace, a profiting by actual graces, faithful employment of the Holy Spirit's gifts and, crowning all, the regular practice of the virtues. And therefore, as these elements are in such close connection, and as habitual grace increases or decreases in proportion with the virtues, it is these very virtues which we now propose to study in Our Lord, calling to mind that all of them are summed up in the one pre-eminent virtue of his Heavenly charity.

To simplify our undertaking let us contemplate the threefold attitude of Jesus: his attitude towards the Father, towards his fellow-men, and towards himself. Nothing could manifest to us more plainly the beauty of his soul and the amazing compass of his love.

* * * * *

First, then, he loves his Father.

And how describe the Master's tenderness towards the One who has begotten him before the worlds? Mere human words are powerless to portray realities so indescribably sublime. But we can try, at least, to give a verbal rendering of the ineffable.

The leading proof of this unspeakable love is in the Saviour's zealous passion for the Father's glory.

Used with a personal connotation, "glory" denotes the radiance emanating from a being and issuing from

that being's excellence. S Ambrose has defined it as *Clara notitia cum laude*—"Clear knowledge with praise," and S Augustine: *Gloria est frequens de aliquo fama, cum laude*—"Glory is high renown with praise." This is the glory which it was the Saviour's constant care to render to his Father, and he invites us to confess, with him, the fame of God's perfections.

Already as a Child he spoke upon the subject of that glory. Replying simply to the mild reproaches of his Mother and S Joseph, who through three anxious days had sought him sorrowing, he asks them: *Nesciebatis quia in his quae Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse?*—"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"[1] All through his public ministry this same desire impels him onward through the cities and the country places, performing miracles to persuade the sinner. *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?*—"I am come to cast fire upon the earth. And what will I, but that it be kindled?"[2] And when the Father's honour is in question, we see him—usually so gentle—moved to anger and visiting with his wrath the sellers in the Temple, who by their trafficking have made the House of God a den of thieves. His mind, indeed, is so preoccupied with the Almighty's glory, that at the last he can declare most truly of himself that he has done his utmost to procure it. *Ego te clarificavi super terram; opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut faciam*—"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,"[3] he says to the Father just before his Death.

This passion for the Father's glory brings about

[1] Luke ii, 49. [2] Luke xii, 49. [3] John xvii, 4.

in him its natural consequence, a hatred of transgression. His sanctity regards all sin with horror, and it is the awful vision of the world's iniquities which causes him the Agony in Gethsemani. In that most solemn hour, the wickedness of sin and its tremendous consequences stand revealed before his eyes, and he beholds that pitiable creature, man, conspiring against God and answering him in pride: *Non serviam*—"I refuse to serve thee," or in mockery, *Non requiret*—"God will not require it of me." At this appalling sight his Heart is broken and his Agony is manifested by the Bloody Sweat, sufficient proof of his tremendous love.

Added to this is an entire obedience: *Ecce venio ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam*—"Behold, I come to do thy will, O God,"[1] is his pronouncement on coming to the world. This perfect harmony between the Father's Will and his continues firm and tranquil through his life. It manifests itself in the dependence shown by him in all his actions and his preaching, and is, indeed, the guiding principle of his life. *Meus cibus est ut faciam voluntatem ejus qui misit me*—"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."[2] And ceaselessly does he perform that Will, from infancy to death. How hard it is for him to ascend the Cross we gather from his longing to escape it as the horror of the Agony draws near: *Pater mi, si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste*—"My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me,"[3] he cries, but adds: *Verumtamen non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu*—"Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt."[4]

[1] Heb. x, 9.
[2] John iv, 34.
[3] Matt. xxvi, 39.
[4] Matt. xxvi, 39.

Thus his entire existence is one continual immolation, fulfilling the four ends of sacrifice.

First, he adores, since in the Gospel he is shown to us as praying morning,[1] noon,[2] and night,[3] where, hidden from the multitudes, he venerates the Father, pouring his whole soul out in unremitting prayer. Then, too, he renders thanks, for he is constantly expressing gratitude to God: *Omnia mihi tradita sunt a Patre meo*—"All things are delivered to me by my Father."[4] Acknowledging that God has made him Mediator between God and man, he says to his disciples: *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me*—"No man cometh to the Father, but by me."[5] And this because of the similitude of nature in his Father and himself: *Ego et Pater unum sumus*—"I and the Father are one."[6] *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem*—"He that seeth me seeth the Father also."[7] He equally declares that God has given him the solemn privilege of being the Judge of all: *Neque enim Pater judicat quemquam; sed omne judicium dedit Filio*—"For neither doth the Father judge any man; but hath given all judgement to the Son."[8]

He also supplicates, for over and over again we see him begging Heavenly succour for himself or others. Before his miracles he lifts his eyes to Heaven to entreat his Father's aid. So, too, he intercedes compassionately for his friends. *Ego autem rogavi pro te, ut non deficiat fides tua*—"I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not,"[9] he says to Peter just before the Saint denies him. And in the priestly prayer he pleads for his Apostles: *Ego pro eis rogo. Non pro*

[1] Mark i, 35. [2] Luke ix, 18, xi, 1. [3] Luke vi, 12.
[4] Luke x, 22. [5] John xiv, 6. [6] John x, 30.
[7] John xiv, 9. [8] John v, 22. [9] Mark vii, 34.

mundo rogo, sed pro his quos dedisti mihi, quia tui sunt—"I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me: because they are thine."[1] All Christian souls, too, are embraced by his solicitude: *Amen, amen, dico vobis, si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis*—"Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you."[2] Sufficient testimony that he prays for those he loves.

And lastly, he atones, since all his life and actions and discourses have a single aim, the banishing of sin's disastrous consequences. Not one disorder is left uneradicated. He re-establishes the slighted, mocked, and outraged honour of his Father, building his teaching on the lofty precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart," and simultaneously restores the dignity of human nature, degraded by the yoke of slavery, by adding to his teaching of the love of God the further precept of fraternal charity. "And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." On the one hand he condemns the maxims of the world and all its foolish wisdom: *Vae mundo!*—"Woe to the world!"[3] and on the other designates to man the goal at which his every effort must be aimed. *Estote perfecti sicut Pater vester coelestis perfectus est*—"Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect."[4] For the rest, his public life is consecrated to the bringing back of men to their true destiny, and to compass this, he uses every possible means in order to impress a salutary lesson on their minds. So thoroughly, that the Apostle's saying that God would re-establish all

[1] John xvii, 9.
[2] John xvi, 23.
[3] Matt. xviii, 7.
[4] Matt. v, 48.

things in his Christ: *Instaurare omnia in Christo,* is realised in him.[1] It is in reparation for the abuse of riches, the pride of intellect, the indulgence of the senses, and for the restoration of the world's stability, that he endures humiliations, poverty, all kinds of suffering and the Agony of the Cross. According to Isaias: *Vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras, attritus est propter scelera nostra*—"He was wounded for our iniquities: he was bruised for our sins."[2]

So Jesus loves his Father, and his love is demonstrated by his zeal, his hatred of unrighteousness, entire obedience, and the spirit of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and atonement.

His attitude towards his brethren is not a whit less admirable, for here, too, all is love.

Two sorts of charity exist—a negative kind, avoiding calumny and evil-speaking, making allowances for others, abstaining from all outward or interior lapses from the law of perfect gentleness and kindness—and positive charity, urging souls to spend themselves for others in leading them to God. This twofold charity was practised in perfection by our Lord. He never failed his neighbour, but spent himself for friend and enemy alike, that he might save them from eternal death.

His life was a perpetual act of mercy. *Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos*—"Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you,"[3] he says to those who suffer. And, quick to take advantage of this invitation, the sick folk throng about his Person, seeking healing,[4] while sinners flock to him to be

[1] Eph. i, 9-10.
[2] Is. liii, 5.
[3] Matt. xi, 28.
[4] Luke vi, 19.

delivered of their sins.[1] How gently he receives and welcomes Mary Magdalen, how graciously forestalls the longing of Zaccheus, with what adroitness he arouses in the heart of the Samaritan woman that godly curiosity which should dispose her to the salutary work of grace. *Si scires donum Dei!*—"If thou didst know the gift of God!"[2] he gently says to her.

In spite of opposition and resistance, his Sacred Heart remains compassionate. *Quoties volui congregare filios tuos quemadmodum gallina congregat pullos suos sub alas, et noluisti!*—"How often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not!"[3] he cries, confronted by Jerusalem's ingratitude. Surely it is the tender pity of his own most Sacred Heart which is depicted in the parables of the Good Shepherd[4] and the Prodigal Son,[5] a pity finding outlet in the words: *Misereor super turbam*—"I have compassion on the multitudes,"[6] when, turning to the crowds which follow him to hear his teaching, he proves himself concerned for their material and spiritual necessity. His tenderness is manifested, further, at the death of Lazarus, which moves him to the point of shedding tears. "Behold how he loved him!" cries the wondering crowd. And Jesus, touched by the distress of Martha and of Mary, destroys the seal of Lazarus' grave, restoring the departed to his sisters' love.[7] But we must turn to the account of the Last Supper for the paramount expression of his love. Disclosing to his friends his coming Passion, he comforts them, encourages and consoles them, promising

[1] Matt. ix, 2. [2] John iv, 10. [3] Matt. xxiii, 37.
[4] Luke xv, 5. [5] Luke xv, 11-32. [6] Matt. xv, 32.
[7] John xi, 44.

them eternal joys if they continue faithful to the end. He knows beforehand that they will forsake him, yet in spite of all, he shows himself, as ever, tender and forbearing. *Vos amici mei estis . . . Jam non dicam vos servos, quia servus nescit quid faciat dominus ejus. Vos autem dixi amicos, quia omnia quaecumque audivi a Patre meo, nota feci vobis*—"You are my friends . . . I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But I have called you friends; because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you."[1]

So mighty is his love that, at his apprehension, his first anxiety is to safeguard those he loves. He asks the enemies before him whom they seek. "Jesus of Nazareth," they cry. And Jesus answers: "I am he. If therefore you seek me, let these go their way."[2] And then, in token of their gratitude, his friends abandon him. . . .

What pure and delicate love, too, for S John, who will desert him! In spite of his foreknowledge of this coming lapse, he suffers John to lean upon his breast at supper.[3]

But crowning all, what kindness to S Peter who denies him! As sole reproach, just after Peter's fall, he gives the guilty one a look of love! which strikes him to the heart.[4]

And Jesus goes yet further, for not only is he gracious to his friends, but also loves his enemies.

"You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to them that

[1] John xv, 14, 15.
[2] John xviii, 7, 8.
[3] John xiii, 25.
[4] Luke xxiii, 61.

hate you; and pray for them that persecute you and calumniate you."[1] So Jesus teaches his disciples on the Mount, and puts his teaching into practice.

His attitude is, notwithstanding, modified by circumstances, varying in accordance with the feeling of his adversaries. Always respecting liberty, he leaves to men the whole responsibility of fixing their own destiny. Met by a hardening of the heart, Our Lord withdraws into himself, although with evident reluctance. Before the Sanhedrim, and in the presence of Caiphas and Herod, he is silent, when he might take up the insults and avenge himself; for silence is preferred by him to anger, and if he breaks the silence, it is only to address his enemies in warning, putting them on their guard against committing the irreparable.

Mark his solicitude, moreover, on behalf of Pilate, who, fascinated by his dignity, would gladly set him free; but fear is Pilate's downfall, and he sends his Prisoner to death. Yet Jesus does not censure him. To all appearance his failure is complete, but no anathema has passed his lips. He seems, instead, to thank his adversary for allowing him to die upon the Cross.

And then what mildness with regard to Judas! "Friend! whereto art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"[2] Friend! . . . So Judas has not forfeited that title even by his crime! If like S Peter he had found repentance, the same forgiveness would have been for him.

How is it possible to describe the Saviour's patience in his Martyrdom? He is insulted, mocked, and struck upon the Face; but in return he utters neither murmur

[1] Matt. v, 43, 44. [2] Matt. xxvi, 50; Luke xxii, 48.

nor complaint. Nothing but gentleness and sweetness find a place in his most Sacred Heart. There falls from him, uplifted on the Cross, that perfect pleading for his executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[1]

The attitude of Jesus towards his brethren was, therefore, one of succour, union, concord, zeal, and sacrifice. "Greater love than this no man hath," he says, "that a man lay down his life for his friends."[2] And he surrenders his, rejoicing in the immolation of himself for the salvation of the world.

Towards himself his attitude is always one of lowliness and of renunciation.

For he is truly humble—humble as man and not as God—exhibiting the threefold lowliness of self-effacement, humiliation, and abasement, in readiness for the acceptance of the most relentless outrages. Far from inviting honours, from the outset Jesus seeks effacement. For thirty years he lives a life of arduous labour as an artisan, completely hidden from the public view, and so fulfils the well-known counsel: *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*—"Love to be disregarded and of no account."

When, later, to fulfil his mission, he must needs reveal himself to men, Jesus is ever careful to ascribe all honour to his Father. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."[3] "I cannot of myself do anything,"[4] he says, with all simplicity, in speaking of his works, *Si ego glorifico meipsum, gloria mea nihil est*—"If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing."[5] With one thing only Jesus is concerned—the glory of the Father.

[1] Luke xxiii, 34. [2] John xv, 13. [3] John vii, 16.
[4] John v, 30. [5] John viii, 54.

Not satisfied with self-effacement, he adds to it humiliation. And this in spite of being the noblest of the sons of men. His human flesh is pure and holy; his mind exempt from error and illusion; his heart is master of its motions; his speech persuasive and convincing; his virtues without equal; but, nevertheless, he recognises that his human qualities all come to him from God. And so, instead of being elated by them, he esteems himself as nothing.

His passion for humility impels him even to abasement. Since he has truly been made sin for us and since all sin must be condemned, he suffers blows and insults and is spat upon, happy to taste of ignominy to the lowest depths of shame. *Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis*—"He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."[1]

During his public ministry, he loves to laud the beauty of humility and his delight in it. *Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde*—"Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart,"[2] are words of his recorded in the Gospel. And therefore God exalts him above all things: *Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum et donavit ille nomen quod est super omne nomen*—"For which cause God also hath exalted him and hath given him a name which is above all names,"[3] says S Paul; for so humility, while seeming to abase, uplifts us to the heights. . . . *Qui se humiliat, exaltabitur*—"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."[4]

To this profound humility he adds renunciation, sacrifice, and immolation. Far from seeking pleasure,

[1] Philipp. ii, 8. [2] Matt. xi, 29.
[3] Philipp. ii, 9. [4] Luke xiv, 11.

he follows after suffering, and as S Paul says: *Christus non sibi placuit*—"Christ did not please himself."[1] Rather: *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit*—"He was offered because it was his own will,"[2] seeking the utmost depths of shame to serve his immolation. *Semetipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens*—"He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant."[3] *Proposito sibi gaudia sustinuit crucem*—"Who, having joy set before him, endured the cross."[4]

When pain confronts him his acceptance of it is no calculated or debated thing, but ardent and wholehearted. We may not doubt the shrinking of his nature, but it is triumphed over by his Will, and he advances upon sacrifice. *Eamus!*—"Let us go!"[5] he says to his Apostles when his Agony is finished.

And there is more than mere acceptance in that attitude of his, for it betrays desire. From the first moment of his life on earth he longs for his last hour. He says to his Apostles: *Baptismo autem habeo baptizari, et quomodo coarctor usque dum perficiatur*—"I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized. And how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"[6] So vehement is his desire for suffering that he can scarcely master it, and sighs impatiently for that momentous hour when he may sacrifice himself at last. *Desiderio desideravi hoc pascha manducare vobiscum, antequam patiar. Dico enim vobis quia ex hoc non manducabo illud, donec impleatur in regno Dei*—"With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer. For I say to you that from

[1] Rom. xv, 3.
[2] Is. liii, 7.
[3] Philipp. ii, 7.
[4] Heb. xii, 2.
[5] Matt. xxvi, 46.
[6] Luke xii, 50.

this time I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."[1]

And at the hour appointed by the Father, he lets himself be sacrificed. Far from resisting death, he goes to meet it. To that decisive question put to him by Caiphas, "Art thou the Son of God?" he answers without hesitation: "You say that I am."[2] Another, in his place, would certainly have sought to clear himself, but he prefers to die. Again, a captive before Pilate, instead of trying to justify himself and plead his innocence, he silently awaits his sentence. For all his enemies, in truth, are helping to fulfil his eager longing.

What peace possesses him in every ordeal! Through all the hours which precede his Passion he remains serene, giving to us a pattern of consummate self-control, a calm, a dignity, a majesty which all his adversaries fail to discompose.

One even senses something joyous in his Martyrdom. For though it may establish the apparent triumph of his enemies, he finds his consolation in the certainty that death will be the crowning of his work. Surely he sees, in his Divine foreknowledge, how by his Sacrifice, Redemption will be won and Heaven peopled by the elect throughout eternity? *Oportuit pati Christum et ita intrare in gloriam suam* —"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory?"[3] And so he yields himself with gladness for the Father's glory and the saving of men's souls.

Such, briefly outlined, are the virtues practised by Our Lord all through his life, and in the grievous hours of his Passion more especially.

[1] Luke xxii, 15-16. [2] Luke xxii, 70. [3] Luke xxiv, 26.

Humility — in self-effacement, humiliation, and abasement — hatred of sin, obedience, zeal for the glory of God, goodness, sweetness, patience, condescension, mercy, forgiveness of offences, love of enemies, abnegation, immolation, sacrifice — these, each in turn, appear in his Most Holy Soul, or show themselves together here and there throughout his life.

Nothing of nobler greatness is conceivable, nothing more lovely could be contemplated, no loftier pattern be proposed for man to imitate. . . . Moreover, all these supereminent virtues concentrate in that one quality of charity, and blossom into adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and atonement, which "victim souls" must strive to reproduce, if they would actually unite themselves to the Divine Redeemer's Sacrifice. Jesus is their example and, to become like him, they need but follow him to Calvary and stretch themselves, with him, upon the Tree of the Cross.

* * * * *

It is, however, obvious that they cannot reach this lofty standard all at once. Progressive effort must be made for its attainment, and here we offer practical suggestions for the course to be pursued.

The victim state approaches very near perfection, and hence necessitates the ascent in due succession of all the different stages of the spiritual life—in other words, passing through the ways traditionally known as purgative, illuminative, and unitive.

The soul desirous of association with the Redeeming Sacrifice will consequently show an eager longing for perfection, and, to prove that her intentions are something more than mere caprice, will steadfastly resolve to suffer all things to attain the love of God.

With this determination rooted in her heart, she will

engage in warfare against sin, and will attack the triple source of sin, the world, the flesh, and Satan, shunning, in turn, first mortal sin, then venial sin, and, lastly, even imperfection. And in her striving after positive results she will employ the means, both natural and supernatural, ordinarily approved of, such as general and particular examen, frequenting the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, seeking in them the cleansing of her faults as well as progress in her intimacy with God.

So, freed from her defects, she will fulfil the duties of her state with conscientious care, and will apply herself with fervour to the illuminative way and to the acquisition of the virtues.

Beginning with humility, she will pursue this virtue to its utmost limit—that is to say, like Jesus, to the love of ignominy. Taking no steps, herself, towards the provocation of contempt and outrage or of opposition, she will accept them all if they confront her in her life. Thereafter she will cultivate, at least in spirit, the moral virtues : poverty, chastity, obedience, using for their development the four cardinal virtues : prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, and at the same time practising the theological virtues : faith and hope and charity, giving immediate union of the soul with God. The last-named virtue will, before all others, claim her close attention. For charity must supernaturalise and order her affections, setting her free to practise positive as well as negative charity towards her neighbours, and yielding up her heart to God that he may consummate his work therein.

Embarking on the unitive way, the soul will labour to increase her charity to its utmost limits, creating

for herself a concentrated inner life and turning inwards to the centre of her being to seek for Jesus dwelling there by grace, with whom her joy will be to live in constant intimacy. Her piety, transmuted by this Heavenly contact, will grow disinterested, desiring the Creator for himself rather than for the consolations which accompany his Presence, till, fired by eagerness to give, she offers the Almighty, by an act of secret or of open consecration, herself, her body, soul, and heart.

The gift once made, the soul advances more and more towards Calvary. With love of suffering and the Cross as the motive power of her spiritual life, she fronts with courage every trial—crosses physical and intellectual, moral and supernatural—glad to be cleansed and sanctified by pain.

And far from being satisfied with such half-measures of heroism, her heart is heedless of its own distress, having no thought for any suffering but that of the Beloved. Before the insults with which God is overwhelmed by sinners, she turns consoler with Veronica, compassionate with Simon of Cyrene, and offers reparation at the Cross with Mary Magdalen.

For reparation now appears to her as a necessity no longer possible to avoid, and she will view it comprehensively. To some it means the attitude of souls who offer Jesus-Victim consolation for the insults which he suffers in his Sacrament of Love, and nothing more than this. Yet that is but a single aspect of the question. Souls certainly do well to offer protestations of affection to the Heavenly Master, to make amends to him for wounds and outrages, but reparation reaches further than the Person of the Saviour, for he himself is the Exemplar of all repara-

tion. In Heaven, before the worlds were made, he was the first to see the beauty of a life of reparation, and was it not that he might live it, in restoring to the world the order overthrown by sin, that he descended from the realms of everlasting splendour?

Therefore the "victim soul" will not content herself with the consideration of indignities sustained by Jesus, but, kneeling by him in Gethsemani and contemplating with him all the world's transgressions, will seek to join herself to him and share his immolation. Then, too, she will not merely watch before the Tabernacle, but rather, in a spiritual sense, will find a way to enter that most lowly prison of love, associating with the Saviour in his adoration. Or, better still, will steal into the Wound in Jesus' Side, to seek for union with his Sacred Heart. Then the two hearts, of Maker and of creature, will beat in unison of love, marking the self-same rhythm, while presenting to the Father an atoning adoration to appease his wrath and satisfy his justice, obtaining thus the pardon of transgressors.

This love in union finds its consummation in the love in self-surrender, the victim love, and love of transformation, when the atoning soul, lost in the glowing furnace of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, resigns herself in true abandonment to his Divine good pleasure. Transformed by Jesus and in Jesus, she joins herself to Jesus' adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation in his everlasting sacrifice.[1]

[1] For a more detailed exposition of the different kinds of love which lead in ordered sequence to the victim state, consult the author's *Ascetical Ascent of the Love of God,* where may be found descriptions of the various degrees of heavenly charity: protestation, demonstration, consecration of the love for God, the love of suffering, the love of reparation, of union, of abandonment, the love of the victim, and the love of transformation.

Clearly the problem finally resolves itself into a state of union with the Redeeming Christ as Victim. And therefore, "victim souls" will never truly follow their vocation except through their association with their Heavenly Master, nor yet attain their end except by making Jesus—Jesus Crucified—their centre of devotion.

* * * * *

There is, however, a distinct devotion which these "victim souls" may also practise with advantage in order to arrive at similar results, and that is the devotion of his Mother at the Cross.

It is, moreover, a legitimate devotion, for though in the economy of redemption, Christ is pre-eminently Mediator between God and man, Mary, according to the Heavenly dispensation, is intermediary between her Son and us. Through her we come to Jesus, and through Jesus to the Holy Trinity. *Ad Jesum per Mariam*—"To Jesus through Mary," says the formula accepted by tradition and theology.

Mary dispenses graces, it is true, but there is something further. She is as well the model for all spiritual victims. Jesus, unquestionably, is the Heavenly Pattern upon whom the soul must form herself if she would win to sanctity, but he, by virtue of his Deity, may seem to be beyond our reach. Whereas, as creature, Mary is more easily accessible, and so to her, too, we must look in seeking to resemble Jesus Crucified.

Watch Mary, then, on Calvary, where the transcendence of her greatness is revealed as nowhere else. For here she is victim with the Heavenly Victim, as, witness of his Agony and powerless to relieve his

pain, she shares his Martyrdom, and so becomes a co-redemptrix.

Her sentiments, moreover, are the sentiments of Jesus and, with him as her Example, she accepts her pain and breathes her "Fiat." Like Jesus she remains serene, not, as some painters have portrayed her, distraught or swooning in theatrical pose, but calm, resigned, and *standing* at the foot of the Cross. A certain joy, indeed, appears through all her grief, for even in the midst of her affliction, she knows that her distress, joined to the suffering of the Heavenly Master, will glorify the Almighty and procure the world's salvation.

No wonder that the Church has sanctioned veneration of the Holy Mother in the role of victim. On two occasions in the course of the liturgical year, she calls us to unite with Mary in her pain. So then, the better to reflect within ourselves her attitude of soul, let us delight in frequent recitation of that beautiful and touching plaint, so eloquent of her emotions—the *Stabat Mater dolorosa* of Jacopone da Todi, the Franciscan.

Let us, then, in conclusion, dwell upon those moving thoughts:

"At the Cross her station keeping
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
  Close to Jesus to the last:
Through her heart, his sorrow sharing,
All his bitter anguish bearing,
  Now at length the sword had passed.

Oh, how sad and sore distressed
Was that Mother highly blest
  Of the sole-begotten One.
Christ above in torment hangs,
She beneath beholds the pangs
  Of her dying, glorious Son.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelmed in miseries so deep
  Christ's dear Mother to behold?
Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
  In that Mother's pain untold?

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender Child
  All with bloody scourges rent;
For the sins of his own nation,
Saw him hang in desolation,
  Till his Spirit forth he sent.

O thou Mother! fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above,
  Make my heart with thine accord.
Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
  With the love of Christ my Lord.

Holy Mother! pierce me through;
In my heart each wound renew
  Of my Saviour crucified:
Let me share with thee his pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
  Who for me in torments died.

Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning him who mourned for me,
  All the days that I may live:
By the Cross with thee to stay;
There with thee to weep and pray;
  Is all I ask of thee to give.

Virgin of all virgins blest!
Listen to my fond request,
  Let me share thy grief divine:
Let me, to my latest breath,
In my body bear the Death
  Of that dying Son of thine.

Wounded with his every wound,
Steep my soul till it hath swooned
  In his very Blood away;
Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,
Lest in flames I burn and die,
  In his awful Judgement day.

Christ, when thou shalt call me hence,
Be thy Mother my defence,
  Be thy Cross my victory;
While my body here decays,
May my soul thy goodness praise,
  Safe in Paradise with thee."

The "victim soul" could scarcely find a better prayer. If she can enter into all its depth and beauty, she will succeed in following her vocation to the end, since, joined to her examples in the supernatural holocaust, her personal sacrifice will find its consummation in her suffering with Jesus Crucified and with his Blessed Mother, our Lady of the Cross.

CHAPTER IV

THE VICTIM VOCATION AND VOW

AFTER the soul has striven to reproduce within herself the thoughts and sentiments and virtues of our Lady at the Cross, and tried to imitate the holy Soul of Jesus, in so far as this is possible, she may advance towards the summits of the victim life, seeking to make the victim state her own in all its supernatural fruitfulness.

Her progress, nevertheless, must be deliberate, because the victim life, planned as it is in graduated steps, needs for its consummation not only a distinct and unmistakable call, but also superintendence by a director of a spiritual and enlightened mind.

Reckless indeed would be the traveller who would risk his life amidst the perils of precipitous and unfamiliar mountain ways without a guide. Even the experienced mountaineer surrounds himself with all the tried precautions, especially when attempting an ascent of more than ordinary danger.

The same holds good upon the supernatural plane. Unquestionably, generous souls who have repeatedly made proof of their sincerity are capable of aspiring to the victim state, but for its realisation they will be well advised to seek the counsel of a wise director who will guide them with discretion in its difficult ways.

Therefore, as we are anxious to keep within the limits of a prudent moderation, while striving to throw

light upon the problem, we shall endeavour in this chapter to supplement existing data by examining the threefold question of the victim's spiritual direction, her vocation and her vow. The director, to be competent, should be endowed with certain natural and supernatural qualities; vocation to the victim life requires for its recognition a substantial basis, and the victim vow, to be engaged in without fear, must be conformed to certain definite conditions. On this hypothesis we ask the reader who has cared to follow us as far as this to give us his attention through this further study.

* * * * *

A fundamental truth and one to be remembered, in the spiritual realm, is this: That man is not alone in working at his supernatural perfection. For in the Holy Trinity, if God the Father has created and God the Son redeemed us, the special mission of the Holy Spirit is our sanctification.

Too many souls, alas! and even many directors, neglect or fail to appreciate this truth—the former wishing to do everything themselves in the great work of spiritual advancement, forgetting that the task of sanctification is above all things supernatural and emphatically demands God's aid—while some directors, arrogating to themselves the place of God, dispense decisions in a random fashion, utterly ignoring the Holy Spirit's operations in men's souls. Whereas the foremost supernatural agent and the principal director of their consciences is God himself, who, through his Holy Spirit of Light and Love, illumines minds and rouses hearts, to lead them step by step to full perfection.

But even though the Holy Spirit plays a part of such importance in our supernatural life, the truth remains that souls, especially those aspiring to the victim life, must seek, amongst the secular or regular clergy, sympathetic priests as their directors, whose function will consist in guiding and controlling in those souls the Spirit's operations.

The need for guidance in these paths is readily understood, and it would be the greatest folly if a soul were to attempt to find her way alone or think herself capable of self-direction. "The first thing God requires of anyone who aspires to sanctity," remarks Père Grou in this connection, "is that he should renounce his own spirit, that he should humble himself, and submit to the guidance of those to whom God has entrusted the care of souls. As there are very special graces attached to this spirit of submission and obedience, so there are many manifest dangers to be incurred when we have the pride to think we can judge and govern ourselves. The way of perfection is full of darkness and obscurities, of temptations and precipices; and to wish to walk alone in it is to expose ourselves to our own ruin."[1]

It is not necessary to conclude from this that, to attain perfection, direction is *essential*. To prove that it is not so we need only glance at certain Saints, such as S John the Baptist, S Mary of Egypt, and S Paul the Simple who, without help of a director, grew to sanctity. The Holy Spirit, says S Gregory the Great, suffices in himself for the direction and enlightenment of certain souls.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the majority of Catholic Doctors recommend the practice, and that

[1] J. Grou, *Manual for Interior Souls* (English tr.), p. 130.

there are countless illustrations of it in the lives of the Saints. By almost all the souls who have most nearly reached perfection we find a human guide, and sometimes we observe between the two a kind of rivalry, constraining both director and directed to a deeper love of God. So was it with S Jerome and S Paula, with Blessed Raymond of Capua and S Catherine of Siena, S John of the Cross and S Teresa, S Francis de Sales and S Jane de Chantal, whose story is as fascinating as it is uplifting.

But the difficulty is to find the right director! "Choose one out of a thousand," says John of Avila, and S Francis de Sales, going further still, adds: "Choose one out of ten thousand, for the priests who have the necessary qualifications for this office are few and far between."[1]

To grant the truth of this is no disparagement of priests in general, for spiritual direction, to be perfect, demands so many qualities, both natural and supernatural, that they are rarely to be found united in a single person. The dearth, so often proved, of true directors, need, therefore, cause us no surprise, but for the sake of souls aspiring to the victim life, it will be well to indicate the leading qualifications to be looked for in a suitable adviser.

Upon the natural plane the good director must be first and foremost a psychologist. For it is most desirable that he should be prepared to recognise unhesitatingly with what manner of soul he has to deal, and that he should be able to discern at a glance the spiritual temper of the person who desires his counsel and instruction. Just as a doctor carefully examines a sick person, so must the priest construct

[1] *Introduction to the Devout Life,* part I, ch. iv.

a spiritual diagnosis, observe the imperfections which require correction, point out the fitting remedies and give fresh impetus to the soul. He will be free to modify his judgement by the light of later knowledge, but he will gain considerably if he can form an accurate estimate from the first. His task will be facilitated by a thorough understanding of the spiritual life. His knowledge should extend not only to the moral and dogmatic branches of theology, but to its mystic and ascetic laws as well. How many priests arrest the upward flight of souls for want of competent knowledge! How many others urge their penitents too rapidly towards the summits of the spiritual life, without insisting first upon the due performance of those acts essential to the Christian life! Whereas, once furnished with the confidence of certain knowledge, the priest can judge correctly to what stage of the ascent the soul has won her way, and can adapt his counsel to its circumstances.

So it is incorrect to claim that every priest is capable of direction, on the assumption that he needs must be possessed of necessary qualifications. Nor is it any nearer truth to say that age and common sense can make amends for ignorance, nor even that an outward show of sanctity infallibly denotes perfection as a director. Against this last illusion S Teresa speaks in warning, preferring, to a spiritually minded but ignorant director, one well-instructed even if less edifying in his character. "Learning gives great light on all points," she remarks, "and it is combined with holiness in some men."[1]

But learning and the psychological sense would not suffice if unaccompanied by ripe experience. Even

[1] *Way of Perfection,* ch. v.

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when steeped in mystic and ascetic lore, a man without good sense and moderation may easily arrive at a decision inconsistent with the good of the soul. Direction is indeed an art, and not a science only: *Ars artium regimen animarum*—"The art of governing souls is high above all arts," remarks S Gregory the Pope. A difficult art, too, since it has to deal not with material elements, but such as are intensely spiritual in their essence.

Nevertheless, though prudence is essential, it need not be the cause of an exaggerated state of trepidation bordering on inertia. Certain directors, on the plea of cautious moderation, paralyse souls and so oppose the Holy Spirit's purpose. Let all directors, therefore, show themselves discreet, let them be prudent but not obstinate, and keep in mind that it is theirs to further —not to thwart—the work of grace. Their duty is to test, but not to tyrannise. The sovereign rule is neither to anticipate the Holy Ghost by premature decisions nor to withstand him by persistent opposition, but rather sensibly to follow the progressive manifestations of his Will.

And lastly, as concerns the spiritual life, the marks of piety and sanctity should be in evidence in every true director. That soul would be unwise who would entrust herself to one without a deep sense of the grave responsibilities which are his. It is, in fact, desirable that the director should possess, besides the natural qualities already mentioned, some personal experience of the spiritual states which he is called upon to watch and superintend. Such personal initiation is not an indispensable condition, since souls already far advanced towards perfection can be successfully directed by a priest himself unblessed by privileges which those souls

enjoy; but it is certain, none the less, that greater insight and productiveness are gained through sanctity.

In point of fact, the psychological sense, knowledge, experience and piety appear as the four constituent elements of ideal direction. If either of these elements is lacking, then there is cause for apprehension. The priest who is not also a psychologist may, by his ignorance, impede souls in their supernatural development. Another, insufficiently equipped with knowledge, is likely to be unreliable in doctrine and in the making of decisions. One who is lacking in experience may easily act imprudently or incautiously, and he whose piety is merely mediocre will find excuse enough for slackened zeal in the exercise of his ministry. So then, the choice of a director is of paramount importance, for on this may well depend the slowness or rapidity of the soul's advance towards the heights.

How then should souls proceed in choosing a director?

In an affair of such importance, they must first of all consult the Will of God in prayer. As he has pledged himself to give us all the necessary means to our salvation, so he will scarcely fail to grant us that of which we stand in need, if sued in confidence and simplicity. The prayer, of course, must be supported by the disposition of the will and the discernment of a faith-enlightened reason.

Strange though it possibly may sound, the heart must also play its part in this election. The masters of the spiritual life aver, indeed, that mutual sympathy is necessary to facilitate the task of the director. Let us examine this in detail.

There are two kinds of sympathy, the natural and

the supernatural. The first kind is inspired by qualities of body, mind and heart, such as exterior advantages, superiority of manners, a sense of fitness, fine intelligence, an upright judgement, sense, a firm and generous will, a leaning towards compassion tempered by discretion and going hand in hand with gentleness and goodness. But supernatural sympathy takes its rise in a mysterious, indefinable and secret influence, and manifests itself through some incomprehensible attraction, giving us, in the priest inspiring it, the promise of a guide assigned by God. It has the effect of rousing in the soul a vehement desire for God, produces an impression of docility and respect which makes obedience easy and secures that grateful peace in which all doubts and scruples disappear, leaving us in serenity and joy.

It need occasion no surprise that these two kinds of sympathy not only *may* exert their influence upon the choice of a director, but that their complementing of each other and their close concordance are indeed desirable. If supernatural sympathy stood alone, it might endanger fervour and retard the soul's advance. Just as it costs great effort to reveal ourselves to a director who, by consistent coldness, chills the heart even while meriting esteem and confidence, so is it correspondingly agreeable and easy to confide in one who draws out and attracts the soul and thus facilitates our overtures. And so with natural sympathy. As the sole motive power it would become a danger and rapidly degenerate into emotion, sensibility or an exaggerated condescension bordering on weakness. An inclination which is wholly sensible is, in such case, to be condemned, and is entirely out of place in a direction claiming to be supernatural.

This twofold sympathy must, in the last resort, give way to faith-enlightened reason. Reason will seek to know whether the priest in question has the essential qualifications, it will weigh the pros and cons apart from any personal attraction, will brush aside considerations prompted by the devil or by nature, and give supremacy to those which come from God and grace.

All that has here been said upon the subject of direction in general, applies with equal force to the direction of those souls aspiring to the victim life. In order that they may be able to disclose their hearts with perfect confidence, they must select as their director one who is capable of understanding them and will not ridicule all mention of the victim state. He should at once know how to deal with such an opening: he must be thoroughly acquainted with the subject, or at the least must take an interest in it. He must be prudent, to restrain all rashness in the victim way, and must himself be on the way towards the realising of this state of life. The ideal, indeed, would be to find a priest who has already made the victim vow, or is advancing, wisely and discreetly, to the taking of this step. Such qualifications, it is true, are difficult to meet and seldom fully realised. But souls must not become discouraged if they fail to find immediately the guide they pray for. Sooner or later God will bring into their lives the one whom he himself has destined to direct them.

Moreover, certain persons fail to distinguish adequately between confession and direction, imagining that their confessor must needs be their director, and *vice versa,* but this is a mistake. No doubt it is desirable to find confessor and director in a single

person, but there is no necessity about it. For the confessor hears the tale of sins committed, weighs them up and, if he finds the fitting dispositions in his penitent, gives absolution, whereas the task of the director is to control the action of the Holy Ghost, to point out reefs upon which the soul may founder, to offer counsel and give judgement with authority. So, then, a soul may make confession for the sake of absolution, without demanding guidance from the absolving priest, and, at the same time, may select as her director one with whom she seldom comes in contact, or who is always at a distance, provided that she keep in regular communication with him, either by sending him a spiritual journal at appointed intervals, or by a wisely ordered correspondence, treating exclusively of supernatural matters.

The soul aspiring to the victim state and seeking a director must, then, be persevering, for God will hear her prayer. Who knows, indeed, whether he may not even make her instrumental in drawing towards the victim way some priest or some religious whom she approaches in her search? For we have met with souls who, quite unconsciously, became a source of edification and a means of sanctification to their directors. These, humbly recognising in themselves a supernatural inferiority, have had recourse, on certain points, to spiritual authorities, the better to equip themselves for their exalted task, and so have glimpsed immense horizons hitherto unknown, and destined to exalt them subsequently to a loftier sanctity.

In any case, souls need not be disquieted because their quest goes unrewarded. If God refuses them the grace of competent direction, it may be that he wills to undertake the task himself. "If," says S Vincent

Ferrer, "adequate exterior guidance and instruction cannot be found, then the Divine compassion will itself supply the need, especially to those who turn to God in humbleness and fervency of heart."[1]

One warning, in conclusion, against a possible peril of direction. Setting aside the danger arising from too great reciprocal attachment in those of opposite sexes, we draw attention to the eccentricities of certain persons, so inordinately anxious to be thoroughly understood that they exaggerate their self-examination and so lose sight of their objective. No sooner have they scented something new than they make haste to share their find with their director, and so molest him as to give him no respite, forgetting that direction is not meant to be a subjection. Instead of flattering their egoism by the concentration of their whole attention upon themselves and the demand for similar interest on the part of others, they would do better to forget themselves and think more undividedly of God. Let them remember that the sanctifying process lies not only in self-study, to the exclusion of all else, but equally in letting grace transform the soul, and that a human counsellor is not the only medium of perfection. Once more—the greatest supernatural agent and the principal director of men's consciences is neither man nor the individual soul, but God himself!

* * * * *

The problem of direction thus disposed of, we are now confronted with the question of *vocation* to the victim state.

A realisation of the truth that holiness consists in the accomplishing of God's most holy will is necessary for its apprehension.

[1] *De Vita spir.*, ch. iv.

"The whole of our perfection," says P. Lallemant, "is dependent on the faithfulness of this performance, and the spiritual life may be epitomised as lying in the careful observation of the Holy Spirit's motions in our souls, with a determination of our will to correspond with them." Elsewhere, expanding the same thought, he adds: "Our greatest evil is our opposition to the plans of God and our resistance to his inspirations. For either we refuse to listen, or, having heard his message, we reject it, or, having heard it and received it, we allow it to be marred and weakened by a thousand imperfections of attachment, self-complacency, and self-indulgence.

"Nevertheless, the point of most importance in the spiritual life is the disposal of the soul towards grace by purity of heart. So true is this that, if two persons consecrate themselves at the same moment to the service of God, and one of the two devotes himself entirely to good works, the other concentrating on the purifying of his heart and the destruction in himself of all that hinders grace, the last will reach perfection twice as quickly as the first."[1]

With this truth well established, let us recall what has been said already in connection with the victim life. In the first chapter of Part II we proved sufficiently that this said victim life is nothing other than the Christian life, and that each Christian, by the simple fact of the supernatural life he has in Jesus, is also victim with him, but that the realisation of the victim state comes only at the climax of the spiritual life. Hence the conclusion that each Christian soul is called, after a general and more distant manner, to the victim state, just as each Christian soul is summoned

[1] *Spiritual Teaching*, 4th principle, ch. ii, 1, 6.

to perfection by the bidding: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect"[1]—(there is, indeed, relationship between perfection and the victim state)—but that vocation to the intimate and individual realisation of the victim state is given to the few alone.[2] And it is in this last-named close and individual call that—to our mind—the true vocation of the victim can be found. Under this aspect it shall be considered in this chapter.

This calling, nevertheless, is not of an extraordinary type, as some imagine, withdrawing souls from the ordinary conditions of the Christian life. It may be rare and singular in fact, but is not so *per se,* to use scholastic language. The only thing extraordinary about it is its name, for men are unaccustomed to such terms as "victim souls," "the victim life," "the victim state," and many Christians might receive it if they would but live a holy life and strive after perfection.

Nor is vocation to the victim state a special call reserved for certain privileged souls, as is vocation to the priesthood or the religious life. Not everyone is called to be a priest or a religious, but every Christian has received his summons to perfection and the victim life, after a general and remote manner, and may, if he responds with zeal, receive an intimate and individual vocation to the loftiest sanctity and the victim state. This state, indeed, is open to the layman, to the priest and the religious, for, like perfection, it accords

[1] Matt. v, 48.

[2] We here make use (with regard to the victim state) of the distinction laid down by P. Garrigou-Lagrange between the general and individual calls to the life of mysticism. His happy definition applies with equal aptness to the question now before us.

with every kind of life. It may be realised with equal fulness in the world, the priesthood, and the cloister.

And further, this vocation is no special one, in the sense of a specific mission which must be fulfilled. True, there are victims who, besides vocation to the victim state, have had a definite and most important part to play in the world : S Joan in the deliverance of her country, S Catherine of Siena in the restoring of the Papacy to Rome, Marie Deluil-Martigny and Caroline Lioger each in the founding of a Victim Order, but these specific missions were in each case independent of the victim life on which they were imposed, without augmenting it or lessening it.

So, then, vocation to the victim state comes as a secret, individual invitation from the Holy Spirit, summoning certain souls, already self-surrendered, to total immolation, in still more definite response to one or even all of the four ends of sacrifice: to adoration, thanksgiving, petition, or expiation.

This calling or vocation being from God, the difficulty is to recognise its true and authentic source. The influences or the spirits or the voices likely to be manifested in the soul are three : The voice of God, the voice of Satan, and the voice of Nature. To aid in their discernment we may briefly note their leading characteristics.

The spirit of the devil whispers evil or only counsels a comparative good as an excuse for pointing out the troublesome consequences which it may involve. He rouses longings for a premature perfection, only to cast the soul anew into confusion and discouragement : he draws her from the duties of her state by breathing dreams of fanciful conditions in her ear : he tempts her out into the glare and tumult of the

world and the desire for it; encourages delight in slippery and dangerous situations; suggests dispensing with all counsel, or else advises a recourse to some imprudent guide, and when director or superior arrives at some decision on the side of right, instils distrust, uneasiness, or criticism and rebellion. To guard against mistake there must be careful scrutiny of the end suggested, lest it should be evil, and of the course of action, whether or no it be imprudent; of the motive, whether perverse or influenced by pride or bitterness; and of the consequences, lest they should be harmful, such as restlessness, discouragement, or despair.

The human spirit, on the other hand, declares itself in aspirations corresponding to the inclinations of the individual temperament, the lusts of the flesh, the gratification of conceit or creature comforts; it holds renunciation, trials, and humiliations in abhorrence, while following after pleasure, honours, and success; it is inconstant, fugitive, and trifling, seeking perfection elsewhere than in ordinary ways; excites in souls a longing for a change in their condition; dispenses with advice when this is likely to run counter to its wishes, and shows itself imprudent, indiscreet, presuming, obstinate, impetuous, too eager to escape from hardness, and too ready to surrender and abandon all when faced with opposition or defeat or failure. In other words, it is expressed in pride or in self-will.

The opposite is true of God's own inspiration, which works in gentle peace and supernatural joy, instead of through perplexity and fear. It reassures, consoles, disposes to the interior life, invites the soul to carry out the duties of her state, urges her to per-

form the good within her power, diverts from all that is suspicious, dangerous, presumptuous, or visionary, and penetrates the deep recesses of the soul; inspires humility and self-distrust, and sets obedience over personal impressions. So, too, when met with opposition on the part of the director or authority, who may be subjecting the soul to studied tests, or may indeed be erring and mistaken,[1] it bends the soul to patience and submission, unless such attitude run plainly counter to the heavenly precepts. Beset by crosses, trials, hindrances, it breathes tranquillity and calm, inspires with confidence and calls to perseverance; is free from rashness, haste, impetuosity, always allowing time for thought and prayer and consultation with the virtuous and prudent; and, in a word, is the perfection of indifference to self, leaving one sole desire, the longing to fulfil the will of God in every detail.

With these distinctions to assist us, the task of recognising the vocation to the victim state becomes less difficult.

As every supernatural calling is, as a general rule, accompanied by an attraction, so this particular vocation is distinguished by an eager longing for renunciation, for self-immolation and for sacrifice—a need of penitence, compassion, reparation, joined to a leaning towards one or all of the four ends of sacrifice: adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation. The calling will reveal itself, as well, in an intense desire for union with the Redeeming Christ as Host or Victim, either on Calvary in the mystery of his Passion, or on the Altar in the Eucharist, or yet again, in the

[1] It is obvious that this does not apply to the infallibility belonging to the Sovereign Pontiff and to Œcumenical Councils.

great testimony of his love for men in manifesting to the world his Sacred Heart. It may present itself beneath the form of a profound conviction wrought out in the spirit; as an interior voice appearing to be heard within; as irresistible instinct, driving the soul to yield herself through suffering to the fires of Heavenly love. In fine, there are certain souls who feel within their inmost being a force constraining them to make an offering of themselves with the Redeemer's Immolation, and so procure God's glory and the saving of men's souls.

Yet to be truly supernatural this attraction must be abiding, peaceful, unexceptionable in its principles, and salutary in effect.

For perseverance is, indeed, a sign of the Divine inspiring, though constancy of purpose does not bring exemption from temptations and revulsions of a momentary character. What wonder that our nature should rebel against the carrying out of sacrifices which are claimed by God, nor that the devil should resist their realisation?

But should the will be fixed on sacrifice, in spite of every obstacle, then it is certain that the aspiration of the soul derives from supernatural sources.

The longing for the victim life must be serene, because the Holy Ghost brings calm and sweetness, unlike the ordinary restlessness and fret of natural impulses. Beneath his influence, the will pursues the object of desire, not with unyielding obstinacy, full of pride and self-deception, but with a calm and confident fixity of purpose, ready to face the checks for which it is forearmed, and to accomplish sacrifices whose extremity of bitterness it perceives beforehand. Imagination, it is true, may act conjointly with the

work of grace. There may, in such a case, be certain upthrusts of enthusiasm which are clearly Nature's work, but if, throughout the intervals of quiet, there still remains a firm attraction for the life of suffering, a genuine impulse of the Holy Spirit is to be discerned beneath the purely natural activity. If this *attrait* were merely the effect of Nature and imagination it would subside abruptly, and would fail to reappear except at times of temperamental excitement.

And, further, the attraction must spring from the purest motives. The victim life is not to be approached from mere caprice or out of love of suffering alone, but with a supernatural purpose, shown in an enlightened mind, discerning all the beauty of the victim state, or else in an impulsion of the will by God, giving a love of sacrifice.

And lastly, the effect of this attraction must be a salutary one, causing the soul to rise to ever greater perfectness of life. Whereas those inspirations which are Nature's work produce no supernatural effect upon the conduct, and while the devil's promptings always tend to evil consequences, the Heavenly leading, on the contrary, develops vigilance, humility, a deeper mortification and desire for greater holiness.

These, therefore, are the leading marks by means of which the supernatural vocation to the victim life may be distinguished. Once it is clearly recognised, the soul must follow it and press towards the victim state, never forgetting that all supernatural vocations need, besides the inner call already spoken of, exterior control by a director or superior. It follows then, that, where the soul attracted to the victim state, and having recognised these several characteristics, is required by her director to delay and exercise some

patience in order to avoid regrettable haste, she will submit to waiting patiently till she is authorised to make a forward move, and subsequently to advance by ordered stages in the victim life.

In similar manner the director, having verified the necessary signs, will give his authorisation, being careful not to hasten matters. Another way in which he may discern the Heavenly Will is by inquiring whether the soul which claims vocation to the victim state has been well tried and has, at the same time, given proof of a love of sacrifice. For instance, should she have suffered much in body through weak health or some infirmity; in mind, from difficulties, obstacles, or contradictions; should she have had her heart crushed by bereavement, cruel separations, or betrayals; her inner life tormented by all manner of supernatural griefs; then it may safely be inferred that God is calling her to follow in his steps to Calvary. But these exterior evidences are not the authentic marks of a vocation to the victim life. They may be simply an appeal for greater generosity or fervour—since God makes use of pain to touch and conquer souls—but ordinarily, they do precede or else accompany the victim state.

Finally, if the soul which hears this call has failed to find the right director, she may betake herself then to study of such works as treat of the victim life. And, once again, let her recall that, in the treading of these ways, there must be no excessive haste.

But, if the summons, being checked and verified, and duly recognised as truly supernatural, sounds ever more imperative, it needs must be obeyed. Some hold that the more perfect way is to resist it, on the grounds that it is better to remain in a condition of

complete abandonment—but this is a mistake. The entering of the victim way does not involve forsaking of abandonment, for self-abandonment, as we shall see hereafter, is the fulfilling of the Will of God, and to respond to a vocation coming straight from God is also to perform his Will.

Therefore we hold that an excess of diffidence is just as prejudicial as excessive hardihood. The soul's response to this vocation to the victim state must be according to the measure of God's Will. As for the manner of its realisation, we shall come to that in studying the final question, to be dealt with in this chapter—that of the victim vow.

* * * * *

The victim life, as has been seen already, consists of several steps, and finds its consummation in the state of host or victim, which, again, can realise itself in gradual stages. The courses which the soul must follow to achieve this state have been described in the preceding chapter. It now remains for us to indicate the later stages of the journey, and these may be reduced to three: habitual practice of the victim spirit, self-offering as a victim, and the victim vow.

Before aspiring to the highest stages of the victim life, the soul should first acquire its spirit. To be a victim is to make of life a constant sacrifice, as Jesus did, who, from the moment of his Incarnation and to his latest breath, made immolation of himself. Therefore the soul which aims at being a victim will respond to her vocation by producing in herself the thoughts, the feelings, and the virtues of the Master or of Mary at the Cross. She will unite herself to them in prayers, in acts and sufferings, and so will never

cry: "Enough of these humiliations, and of toil and sufferings! Enough of sacrifice for others; enough of fervour for God's glory!" but, like her Master, having answered: *Ecce venio,* to God's call for total sacrifice, will strive to reproduce the perfect spirit of Jesus in the offering of his Sacrifice.

To win it wholly, she will do away with every evil in herself, with all the "old man's" inclinations and desires, and yield herself entirely to transforming grace, in preparation for the supernatural holocaust. S Paul's ideal will then become her own: *Desiderium habens dissolvi et esse cum Christo*[1]—"Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," the longing for some kind of self-obliteration in order to make room for Jesus in the inmost being.

This transformation forms the earliest of the three last stages. The soul must strive to realise it ere advancing further, and the director called upon to give his counsel must admonish her to practise this as perfectly as possible.

When once a satisfactory trial has been made, the soul may then pass on to make oblation of herself to God as victim.

This offering, nevertheless, is not a vow, and so does not involve fresh obligations. It may more truly be described as consecration, accompanied by a resolve to live the Christian life with fervour and in all its fulness.

As certain writers have provided us with forms of dedication, we may cite the following, addressed to God the Father, as giving an example of the ardour which such forms should manifest and of their general content:

[1] Philipp. i, 23.

Act of Oblation.

"Most Holy and Adorable Father!

"Eager to correspond with and to strengthen in myself baptismal grace, for thy sole glory and the glory of my Heavenly Redeemer,

"In union with my sweetest Lord, who offered himself to thee throughout his life and still makes offering of himself each day upon the Altar, as a spotless Victim, for the world's salvation,

"By the pure hands of Mary, Mother and Mediatrix, my perfect pattern in the victim life,

"And in accordance with the spirit of the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church,

"I offer myself to thee as victim, O my Father, and desire, with the assistance of thy Heavenly grace, to answer to the purpose which thou hadst in mind in calling me from nothingness and making me partaker in the grace of the Redemption.

"I long to be for ever as a holocaust before thee, consumed in the accomplishment of thy good pleasure, and glorifying thee according to thy most adorable and compassionate will for me.

"But, to this end, I crave, as signal graces, deep contrition for my past misdeeds, a steadfast will to expiate them in accordance with the righteous claims of thine adorable justice, and a firm determination never to offend thee in the future nor to distress in any wise thy Fatherly Heart.

"I long, indeed, if this desire conforms with thy designs for me and by the aid of thy sweet, strong, and ever-holy grace, to bear sin's penalty as merited by my brethren, all the sinners of the world, that they may find salvation and give glory to thy Name throughout eternity.

"I earnestly desire thee, of thy Fatherly goodness, to bestow on me these special graces: faith, humility and patience, gentleness, mortification, hope and charity.

"I will accept whatever crosses thou mayest send me, because the Cross is the appropriate portion for the victim and the place of his repose, his strength, his gladness, and his life.

"I will accept both agony and death, as well as the entire annihilation of my present life, to honour thee, as Jesus and his Mother honoured thee, in thine unchangeable and everlasting Being.

"Once more, O Father infinitely worthy of all love and adoration, I offer myself to thee, praying thee by the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and his Mother, to accept me as a victim for eternity, that I may worship thee with all thy Church in Heaven, for ever and for ever. Amen."[1]

An act of offering such as the above is admirable to a certain point, but victim states pre-eminently find their consummation in the victim vow. The selfsame difference exists between the victim life as claimed by offering, and the victim vow, as can be found distinguishing the practice of perfection by a generous Christian from the practice of perfection issuing from the realising of a vow of highest perfection. We live the very life of Jesus-Victim in the victim life, by means of an intention varying in fervour and in constancy, but free from any special obligation; whereas through the victim vow we pledge ourselves to live the victim life and take upon ourselves responsibilities which we must then discharge on pain of sin. It needs to be remarked, however, that such sin is venial, since to pledge the soul to immolation under pain of mortal sin would be the height of indiscretion.

The delicacy of this question is apparent, and, to explain it clearly, we must discuss, in turn, the inten-

[1] Giraud, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

tion, matter, and duration of the vow, which in itself may offer several different stages.

The *object* or *intention* for which self-oblation may be made, can either be particular or general, but (whether it approaches closely to them or not) it must at any rate be aimed at these two ends—forming in actual fact but one—God's glory and the saving of men's souls. The object kept in view may be the spiritual benefit of a particular family or community, a parish, diocese, or country, the Church, or even of the world in its entirety, but, for avoiding vagueness in these latter cases, it is as well to specify some special end. Thus, if the object chosen is the welfare of the Church, the specified intention may be given to the person of the Sovereign Pontiff, the sanctifying of the priesthood, the perfecting of monks and nuns, the final agony of the dying or the release of souls from Purgatory. It is for each to choose according to the tastes and aspirations of his individual piety.

The *matter* of the vow may also vary and increase proportionately to the scope of its intention, which may include the trials of each day, the sufferings of the future, or the sacrifice of life itself.

For every day brings tribulations such as illnesses, misfortunes, and annoyances of divers kinds, and in their train come weariness and tedium and depression, causing suffering to the soul. The primary matter of the vow may be a promise to accept these trials without murmuring, with generosity and calm.

Acceptance of the troubles of each passing moment is a sacrifice well-pleasing to the Almighty : the addition of those others which the future still conceals from us will give it greater worth. And all these future

trials may become the second subject of the victim vow.

Here it may be expedient to observe the difference between the sufferings which the omniscient providence of God has purposed for our future, and those additional ones which we may ask of him. For, strictly speaking, pledges of acceptance, in anticipation, of all the pains which God has planned for us, may readily be taken; but when it is a question of what sufferings it is proper to request of him, the utmost moderation and discretion must be used.

Some disapprove of a demand for further sufferings. Others maintain that it is lawful, but that temptations and interior troubles, as well as those which might recoil upon another—such as an illness troublesome to nurse—must be excepted. These seem to us the idlest of discussions in which we have no wish to interfere, contented to adhere to our position—namely, that no soul should be permitted to advance in these directions without a properly authenticated call from God. The Holy Spirit's call may be resisted at the outset, from prudence or through fear of a mistake, but should his voice become insistent, then the soul must yield and give him his desire. Once more, it is not man's vocation to lay down the law, but rather to surrender and obey.

In this connection comes to mind the wondrous colloquy sustained between S Margaret Mary and our Lord, which she herself recounts for us. Writing to her director she relates to him the claim which has been made upon her by the Sacred Heart, and says: "Know, then, that my Divine Redeemer, having appeared one day to his unworthy servant, said to me: 'I seek a victim for my Heart, a victim who will

sacrifice herself as holocaust or host for the accomplishment of my intentions.' Whereupon, I, having perceived myself to be all penetrated with the splendour of this Heavenly Majesty, cast myself humbly at his feet, suggesting to him several holy souls who would most nearly correspond with his designs. But this sweet Saviour answered me: 'I want no other victim than thyself, and it is for this, indeed, that I have chosen thee.' Then, bursting into tears, I showed him my great guilt, which well he knew, and spoke of how a victim should be innocent, and said that though, in truth, I had no will but his, I could not bring myself to act in any way apart from the commands of my superior. And to this he gave assent. I never ceased, however, to resist his invitations, fearing that such extraordinary courses might divert me from the single-minded following of my vocation. But my resistance was in vain, for he allowed me no repose until, through holy obedience, I had made an offering of myself to suffer every kind of trial, humiliation, contradiction, pain, and shame, with the sole object of fulfilling his intentions."[1]

And was it not in answer to such summonses as this that Francis Xavier cried: "Give me more sufferings, O Lord! still more and more!" that S Teresa chose as her device: "Either suffering or death," and that S John of the Cross implored his Master: "Let me endure and be despised for thee, O Jesus!" These instances from lives of noble souls suffice to prove that sufferings may be sought, but only under Heavenly inspiration.

The third form which the victim vow may take is that wherein the soul, besides her promises of future

[1] *Vie et Œuvres,* vol. ii, p. 271.

sufferings, makes sacrifice of life itself. The reader has no need to be surprised or startled by this total immolation, for, in acting so, the soul is following the example of her Saviour, who made an offering to his Father of his whole existence, not only acquiescing in and seeking suffering, but willing, too, to lay his life down for the Father's glory and the world's salvation.

Moreover, the perpetual victim state achieves its ultimate perfection in this gesture of supreme oblation. Was it not in the death and burning of the victims that the Old Testament sacrifices found their true fulfilment? and was it not by his death that Jesus' Sacrifice was fully perfected? And so it is in offering their life that Christian souls are truly constituted victims. Through total immolation, giving God freedom to dispose of them according to his pleasure, and through their promise to accept the hour and form of death which he shall choose for them, they win for themselves a more complete participation with their Master in his saving Sacrifice.

These several points suggested for consideration might be enlarged upon indefinitely, but it is for souls themselves and for the directors of their consciences to choose the scope and manner of the gift. Let it suffice that we have indicated the leading principles to be considered in this immolation.

As for the vow's *duration,* it may be either temporary or perpetual. It may be made for one day only at the outset, then for a week, a month, a year, with shorter or with longer intermissions, or else may be renewed immediately, according to the circumstances of the subject, but always with the need of prudence and precaution well in view. Perpetual vows

and sacrifice of life itself should never be embarked upon before substantial proof of genuine immolation has been given.

* * * * *

So, then, the victim vow consists in generous acceptance—that is to say, that there must be no voluntary or deliberate refusal of any suffering whatsoever, should God's will in the matter be sufficiently clear. In other words, all crosses—physical, intellectual, moral, and supernatural—whether at hand or in the future, will be accorded an unmurmuring welcome, with a particular intention and for a certain specified time. And sometimes, also, supplementary sufferings will be craved, or sacrifice of life itself presented in anticipation.

By reason of the many difficulties which surround it, the victim vow must never be made without the utmost prudence and discretion. But far from all disparagement of the vow and from association with those timid counsellors who would dissuade men from it, we shall not cease from lauding its sublimity and fruitfulness, nor rest from our assertion that the souls fulfilling its conditions are not very far removed from sanctity.

Therefore let "little souls" who tread the way to Calvary with Jesus pursue their upward path with generous courage, having its consummation well in view. The victim state of which that consummation is the crown is of all states the holiest, most fruitful, and most excellent, which can be aimed at on this earth. Happy is he who comprehends this and achieves it, for, from the supernatural point of view, he is, in union with his Heavenly Master, a benefactor of the

human race. The highest life, indeed, is not to labour that our fellow-men may fare more prosperously in this present world, but, by a life of prayer, of suffering, and of zeal, to snatch them from the toils of Satan and conduct them to the Father's house in Heaven.

PART III

ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL SURVEY

CHAPTER I

THE ATTITUDE OF THE VICTIM SOUL

THE second part of this inquiry has presented an examination of the victim life from the doctrinal point of view, adducing evidence to show that, on the dogmatic side, it may be proved by means of a theological proposition that this victim life is nothing but the Christian life completed by the victim state. This state itself is one of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation, having the double function of procuring the Creator's glory and co-operating with our Lord in saving souls. Later, the moral viewpoint was adopted and indications given of the virtues which must deck the victim state, together with the paths which must be followed to attain it. And lastly, we have shown in what consists the victim vocation, the way in which it is revealed, and the conditions of its consecrating vow.

The study of the subject claims, for its completion, an examination of the problem from the mystical and ascetic point of view—*i.e.*, the active shares which God and man contribute to the victim state must be distinguished and defined. The victim state, in fact, demands of man, upon the one hand, an activity which is ceaseless in the duties of the Christian life, and, on the other hand, a measure of passivity, yielding the soul up to the action of the Holy Spirit, both in prayer and in acceptance of the trials which com-

pose the common order of the victim life. As it is obvious that these questions cannot all be studied simultaneously, the general attitude of victim souls will first be dealt with, an attitude which, to the author's mind, is summed up in what spiritual writers term abandonment. Abandonment has both its active and its passive aspects; passive because insisting on the acceptance of the trials sent by God; and active, in its summons to the soul to do his will in all things in the face of these ordeals.

Some may incline to challenge this assertion, since it is customary to distinguish in an arbitrary manner between abandonment and victim life, pretending that the latter takes us further than abandonment; but this is so in outward seeming only. Lest we be misinterpreted, we would asseverate that we are not denying the existence of a genuine distinction between the victim life and self-abandonment, but, nevertheless, we do affirm that victim souls, their offering and their vow once made, must live in self-abandonment. And, to appreciate the finer shades of this assertion, we must define the term abandonment. The definition will assist us in surmounting future difficulties.

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There is an axiom universally accepted by the masters of the spiritual life: "Perfection is acquired through the complete fulfilment of the Heavenly Will."

"Remember, it is of the greatest importance," says S Teresa, "that the sole aim of one beginning to practise prayer should be to endure trials, and to resolve and strive to the utmost of her power to conform her own will to the Will of God. Be certain that

in this consists all the greatest perfection to be attained in the spiritual life. . . . Do not imagine that we need a cabalistic formula or any other occult or mysterious thing to attain to it; our whole welfare consists in doing the Will of God."[1]

The same truth is affirmed by S Alphonsus Liguori, who declares: "Our whole perfection lies in loving God, a Being infinitely lovable, and the perfection of this heavenly love consists in union of our will with that of God. . . . If, then, our longing is to please him wholly, we must strive not only to *conform* ourselves in all things to his holy Will, but so to *uniform* our wills with his—if one may so express it—that of the two wills there results but one. . . . The Saints have always strained to do the Will of God alone, persuaded that in this consists the whole perfection of the soul. David was called by God a man 'after his Heart,' because that righteous king was ever ready to perform God's Will; and Mary holds her place as the most perfect of all Saints because her will was always most perfectly united to the Will of God."[2]

This self-same principle is furthermore laid down by Fr. Rodriguez: "Just as the love of God is our most perfect and exalted form of virtue," he affirms, "so a complete submission to his Heavenly Will is the sublimest and most pure expression of this love and its most exquisite adornment. . . . Moreover, is it not clearly manifest that as there is nought so holy and so perfect as the Will of God, so our advance in sanctity and virtue depends upon the perfecting of our conformity to that most holy Will?"[3] Perfection,

[1] S Teresa, *Interior Castle,* Second Mans., ch. i, 15.
[2] S Alphonsus, *Conf.,* ch. i.
[3] Rodriguez, *Christian Perfection,* 8th tr., ch. i.

then, is gained by means of a complete fulfilment of the Heavenly Will.

* * * * *

This Will of God, according to the masters of the spiritual life, is made known to us in either of two ways :—through the *will signified* or through the *will of good pleasure*. The Will of God is obviously not two but one, and the distinction is but a man-made definition formed to assist us to discern that Will.

The will signified, according to S Francis de Sales, is that which is made plain to us through God's commandments and the injunctions of his Holy Church, by the duties of our state, the evangelical counsels and the precepts, the secret inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and—for those souls who serve God in the cloister—the holy constitutions of their rule, revealing that which God requires of us.[1]

The will of God's good pleasure, on the other hand, is shown to us through outward happenings encountered in our lives, and these occurrences are brought about by God, acting upon us through his free or limited creatures. Our lives are troubled, gladdened, or, more frequently, distressed by means of them.[2]

Dom Lehodey, following S Francis, has called attention to the fact that the will signified is known to us beforehand, and usually in a clear and definite manner, through the medium of the Church, of our director or superiors, whereas the will of good pleasure is discovered to us only through the circumstances which reveal it, and thus is quite beyond the

[1] S Francis de Sales, *Love of God,* bk. viii.
[2] *Ibid.,* bk. ix.

power of our foreseeing. *Therefore detachment from self-will, in order to give place to the commands of God's good pleasure, is practising abandonment to his Will.*

In one of his familiar and enlightening passages, Monsignor Gay has furnished us with a precise and accurate definition of abandonment: "The question now is of abandonment," he says, "no longer of *obedience*. For though obedience, as surrender of our freedom to the Will of God, is in close relationship to the sweet usage of abandonment, yet, when examined closely, a distinction will be found between the two. Sufficient here to note that while obedience is connected with the cardinal virtue, justice, abandonment is linked up with the theological virtue, charity. Neither are we concerned with *resignation,* although it looks towards the Heavenly Will and always in submission to that Will. But its capitulation is of a vanquished will, a will, that is to say, which has not yielded from the first, and which surrenders only through self-mastery. Abandonment is something more than this. The term *acceptance* also fails to meet the case. The will of man accepting that of God appears, however humble and correct its attitude, to claim the status of a contracting party and to subordinate itself to God only when all its rights have been established. This, then, advances us no further on our way. But *acquiescence* brings us nearly to our goal. It is a fair expression, full of unction, light, and grace, and is employed by Scripture: *Fideles in dilectione acquiescent illi.*[1] Does it not, nevertheless, appear as though an act of acquiescence such as this implies a slight interior contention, through which

[1] Wisd. iii, 9.

the soul, first troubled by the will of God, is subsequently pacified and offers no resistance? *Conformity* may also be considered a fitting term which may be spoken of as consecrated. Rodriguez has composed an excellent treatise on this subject, in his much-to-be-commended work: *On Christian Perfection*. But all the same, the word suggests a state rather than a specific act, and the state described hints at an earlier struggle for adjustment. The very sound of it evokes the picture of a pattern which the soul has looked upon, admired, and subsequently forced herself to imitate. And even where conformity has been attained without a conflict—however good and worthy it unquestionably is, a state supremely worthy of respect—there somehow clings about it a suggestion of frigidity. Conformity of mind and temper is a precious thing in friends who love each other, for therein love and friendship may discover what they seek, and in it rest content; but once make the abiding there compulsory and love would feel imprisoned, would repine, and in the end would be constrained to break its chains. Another word which calls for our consideration is *indifference*, an accurate term and frequently employed. It does, indeed, describe the state of soul which gives the Will of God the unrestricted homage now in question, but rather pictures the soul's attitude towards the thing which she no longer loves, at least, towards some dominant affection from which this state has now detached her. It is, in fact, a negative expression. Love may make use of it, but only as a stepping-stone, for nothing is so definitely positive as love.

"Therefore, the right and fitting word to crown our search must be *abandonment*. The act for which it

stands, an act sweet, full, alive, ineffable, is it not truly the most natural inclination, the inwardest and most imperious of interior needs, the most supreme and positive act of love? Abandonment is something more than giving of self. For Jesus gave himself in the Incarnation, but in his Passion he abandoned himself, and still is self-abandoned in the Eucharist. So that the Cross and altar—which, in reality, are but two aspects of the self-same thing—the Cross and altar are the final word of Jesus' love."[1]

Abandonment is therefore neither resignation, acquiescence, conformity, obedience, acceptance or indifference, for it is more than all of these. It is a supernatural disposition causing generous correspondence with everything that God may will or that he may not will, and by means of which he calls us to accomplish faithfully whatever he requires our love to do for him.

Monsignor Gay says further: "Self-abandonment is self-renunciation. It is to leave, forsake and be estranged from self, to lose one's self in total self-surrender, without reserve or limitation and with scarce a thought, to him who would possess us. For self-abandonment is an out-pouring of the self."[2]

Further, abandonment consists of two constituent elements, one negative—that holy unconcern calling us from attachments to the things of earth; the other, positive—complete submerging of our will in God's Will, causing us to act with generosity and love. This is not wholly passive, as the Quietists would have us think, for even if a certain measure of passivity is pre-

[1] Mgr. Gay, *La Vie et les Vertus chrétiennes: De l'abandon à Dieu*, vol. ii, p. 372 *et seq.*
[2] Mgr. Gay, *De l'abandon à Dieu*, p. 374.

supposed in the reception of the manifesting of the will of God's good pleasure, it also claims perpetual activity in carrying out that will, including, further, prayer of supplication and resolute effort in the practice of the virtues and in pursuit of everlasting good. Moreover, the passivity attending the most elevated states of spiritual life is always transitory, for man must needs collaborate with God in working out his own salvation.

Having established our conception of abandonment, we now turn to the conduct of the Christian when confronted by the divers incidents whereby the will of God's good pleasure is discovered to his soul.

* * * * *

Père Ramière, in his dissertation on Abandonment, has clearly sketched the course to be pursued in all the circumstances that our life may offer us.

He first recalls the principles laid down by Père de Caussade in his writings on the subject of abandonment: (1) That nothing can occur in either the material or moral worlds which has not been foreseen by God from all eternity and which he has not either willed or else at least permitted, and (2) that God can neither will nor yet permit what does not tend to his own glory. To these Père Ramière adds a third: "God longs to glorify himself, as long as man is dwelling on the earth, by means of this his privileged creature's happiness, and consequently in his plan the sanctification and the happiness of man cannot be separated from the interests of God's glory."

Père Ramière draws a lesson from these principles: "As nothing can take place," he writes, "without God's sanction, and as he sanctions nought but what is for our good, we need fear nothing save a falling

short in our submission to his Will. So long as we remain united to him, walking in the way that he marks out for us, let all creation be arrayed against us, we remain unscathed. For whosoever leans on God becomes, through his dependence, potent and irresistible as God himself, so that created things prevail no more against him than against their God."

Again, Père Ramière writes: "Such confidence in the paternal providence of God does nothing to dispense us from the putting forth of every effort to fulfil his purposes; but having done the utmost in our power, we may, by passive self-abandonment, leave all the rest to God.

"Abandonment must cover everything; the past, the present, and the future; the body with its varying conditions; the soul in all its wretchedness as well as in its virtues; both good and evil matters; the favour and malevolence of men; the changes and caprices of material creation; the revolutions of the moral world; our life, our death, and all things both in time and in eternity.

"Yet, as these things perform their part in the designs of Providence in widely differing manners, so must abandonment applied to them adapt itself in varying forms. The rules to be observed in exercising this particular virtue must be gathered from the nature of the facts with which it has to deal."[1] Père Ramière then proceeds to pass them in review.

"There are," he says, "amongst the many circumstances calling for abandonment, certain which are dependent solely upon God, and wherein human

[1] *Abandon à la providence divine,* posthumous work by P. J-P. de Caussade, abridged edition, revised and corrected by P. H. Ramière, preface, pp. vi, vii.

choice has no concern, being powerless to provoke them or avert them. Such are, for instance, visitations and calamities—vicissitudes of climate, accidents impossible to foresee, and certain natural defects of body or of soul.

"Regarding facts like these, past, present, or to come, the measure of our abandonment can never be too complete. No other course is open to us but a passive, loving acquiescence in whatever God has sent us, and a blind acceptance, in advance, of all that it may be his Will to send us in the future. Resistance would be fruitless, and would only magnify our miseries; acceptance, on the contrary, inspired by love and frequently renewed, makes these inevitable trials meritorious. And, strange to say, abandonment not only has the property of sanctifying actual sufferings and rendering them fruitful, it also causes us to reap great merit from afflictions which we are never called upon to bear. For by a meek acceptance of these tribulations when they rise before the mind as probable or even merely possible — by willing acquiescence and a *fiat* spoken from the heart — we cannot fail to give God pleasure and to bring much profit to our souls. So, in this primary class of happenings, the practice of abandonment inevitably has a sanctifying force, transforming real and even purely hypothetical tribulations into means of sanctification.

"Another kind of suffering comes through the malevolence of creatures. Of such are: persecutions, calumnies, ill-treatment, hurt affections, injustices, and evil deeds of all descriptions. What should he do who is exposed to such vexatious happenings?

"1. It is, of course, impossible to relish the affront to God which is contained in them. The insult must,

indeed, be hated and deplored, not on account of any wounding of our own self-love, but for the wrong done to the rights of God and for the danger to the offending souls who thereby jeopardise their own salvation.

"2. Where it concerns ourselves, however, we must strive to see the good in what, *per se*, is evil; and to succeed in this, must look beyond the creature who is the immediate cause of our distress, to God who, able to prevent it, has allowed it, with our happiness in view. This thought should be sufficient to allay the bitterness and turmoil which might take possession of our hearts if we regarded solely the injustice we were called on to endure.

"3. As for the finished and irreparable consequence of the injustice, we have no choice but to resign ourselves to it, as lovingly as possible, with careful garnering of its precious fruits. Nothing is easier, at times, than to divine what spiritual harvest God has had in view when causing us to be exposed to temporal ills; detachment from created things, deliverance from inordinate affections, from pride or from indifference, real maladies of the soul, and frequently more dangerous still through being unobserved, from which the Heavenly Surgeon would release us, using our neighbour's malice as an effectual instrument. We do not hesitate to suffer even greater things to gain relief from some infirmity of the body: how much more, therefore, should we grasp the spiritual health which God is offering us, however sharp the instrument through which the healing comes.

"4. If it is in our power to ward off the effects of malice and injustice, and if both personal interest and the interest of God's glory convince us that we should endeavour to avert them, the necessary steps may then

be taken, without, however, any swerving from the holy practice of abandonment. The issue must be left to God, with readiness to welcome failure should he deem it more expedient for his purpose and more beneficial for the soul. Our ignorance and blindness should give us constant cause for fearing self-deception, but God is not deceived; and we may rest assured beforehand that what he determines will be best. No better course is open to us than the confident abandonment to God of the result and outcome of our efforts.

"It may be asked if this abandonment should equally apply to faults and indiscretions of our own and all the harm which may accrue from them. And here it is important to distinguish carefully between two separate ideas which vanity is liable to confuse—in the fault itself, between what is really culpable and what humiliating; and, in the resulting issues, between the injury inflicted on the Heavenly glory and the mortification of our own self-love. Clearly the fault as such can never be sufficiently abhorred, nor can we grieve too keenly for the hurt done to God's glory. But where our own humiliation and our vanity's confusion are concerned, we should rejoice and acquiesce in full abandonment. Undoubtedly this type of sacrifice is well adapted to destroy in us the deepest roots of our conceit and foster rapid progress in the way of virtue. When souls have reached a certain stage of regularity and detachment, outward humiliations are of little consequence. When once the vanity of human honour has been understood, the pricks of scorn are easily endured; but even coexistent with this outward unconcern, there may be an exaggerated estimate of self and an entirely selfish longing for perfection. If this should be the case, self-

love, though with an altered aim, has only grown more subtle and more dangerous. No instrument for its destruction is more effective than humiliation issuing from our faults, and we should therefore spare no effort to extend the practice of abandonment to these humiliations, while endeavouring to correct the faults themselves.

"And all that has been said of past offences applies, as well, to lapses yet to come. Abandonment, if rightly understood, should save us from impatience which desires to reach the summit of the mount of sainthood in a single stride, and which, instead, succeeds in making it more inaccessible still by keeping us from walking in the only path which climbs it. This path is nothing other than humility, and our impatience but a form of pride. By all means, let us labour to the utmost of our power to cure our faults, but let us not expect to lose them in a single day. Let us most earnestly, with filial confidence, entreat of God the ultimate grace which shall detach us wholly from ourselves that we may live in him alone, while still, with a son's abandonment, leaving to him the fixing of the day and hour of its bestowal.

"Still more should we surrender to his Will the stage of sanctity to be attained by us on earth, any extraordinary graces which may wait upon that sainthood in this present life, and the degree of glory crowning it in Heaven. So far as the augmenting of both sanctity and glory depends upon ourselves, no effort must be spared to reach the point decreed for us by God, but even while exerting all our energies to carry out his plans, there must in no case be a wish to have them other than they are. Given the love for God which is his due, we shall accord him thanks for

favours which he has refused us and bestowed on other souls, and shall extol him for our poverty and want no less than for their riches."[1]

This author, in pursuing his investigations, raises the question as to whether our abandonment should lead us further still. "Take the hypothesis of our damnation, which is, alas, unquestionably possible," he says. "Should we resign ourselves to this, and so make sacrifice complete and absolute to God of all our personal interests?"

Fénélon would have pressed perfection of abandonment and purity of love to this conclusion, adducing many plausible reasons to support his doctrine. He borrowed from the writings and examples of the Saints more specious arguments still, to prove that God does frequently exact this total sacrifice from the elect, and that, in order to obtain the sacrifice, he prints upon these souls an irresistible belief in their eternal reprobation. According to this great ecclesiastic, the love of God is found in perfect purity only in such as have endured this test unflinchingly, and who, at least by a hypothetical sacrifice, have yielded every personal interest, even that of their eternal welfare.

The Church, however, has condemned this doctrine, which suggests to man an order of perfection inconsistent with his nature, and thus subversive of God's purposes. For how could man's perfection lie in the destruction of the most essential law of his own moral nature—that irresistible propensity of his to seek for happiness? How could the love of God demand his deprivation by his creatures of that particular attribute which causes him to be the sovereign object of their bliss? How could one theological virtue contradict

[1] Ramière, *op. cit.*, p. vii, *et seq.*

another and love prohibit hope? What is eternal happiness if not the reign of perfect love? and how could perfect love, in time, consist in the exclusion, albeit supposititious, from our desires, of perfect love in everlasting life?

The law of perfect charity demands that the designs of God should be enshrined in our desires. God has created all things primarily for his glory, and secondarily, but inseparably, for our happiness. Let us, like him, be careful not to separate the interests of his glory from the interests of our happiness, keeping the latter always in subordination to the former. Let us love God as the object of our blessedness, but chiefly on account of his immeasurable goodness. Let us desire and hope for our eternal bliss, but inasmuch as this felicity when we possess it will proceed from out the love of God for God, let us from henceforth seek it as it will be in reality, directing our desire towards the glory of that great and glorious God who wills to be all in all.

So we may practise love and hope together, pursue God's glory and our personal happiness, fulfil his purposes while satisfying the profoundest, most invincible requirement of our nature.[1]

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Such is abandonment in theory. We now proceed to look at it in practice; in other words, to study the behaviour of a self-abandoned soul.

Monsignor Gay, who is a master of the subject, has given us an admirable picture of such a soul as this.

[1] Ramière, *op. cit.*, p. xvii, *et seq.* In this chapter we are purposely quoting many and lengthy passages from weighty authors supporting what we teach, to prove that it is in the following and tradition of Catholic orthodoxy.

"She lives the life of faith," he says, "she hopes as naturally as she breathes, she loves continuously. Each manifestation of the Heavenly Will discovers her at liberty and takes possession of her as of an unclaimed plot of ground. To her all things are equally acceptable, whether it is to be as nothing, much or little; to order or to obey—giving obedience here or there alike—to be humiliated or forgotten; to want or to be supplied; possess much leisure or be overwhelmed with toil; to be alone or in the company of others, and in a company not of her own choosing; to see a long expanse of road ahead or only just enough for the next step; to meet with consolation or with dryness and to find temptation in the dryness; be well or ill, or always ailing and obliged to bear with feeble health for many weary years; to live long, meet an early death or die immediately; all this to her is equally acceptable. Desiring all because desiring nothing, desiring nought because desiring all. Not everything is equally attractive to her inclination, for such a state is unattainable and hope of it a foolish dream. She feels and suffers in the natural man. In human eyes her life is truly martyrdom, and human judgement therefore constantly cries out against it, but Christian sentiment replies: "So much the better. . . ." Taking no heed of what she feels, and reckoning her suffering as of no account, she is prepared for all things and submits to them in advance. Others may be more richly clothed with grace, and may, to the outward eye, abound in greater virtue; she nourishes no jealousy, but rather rejoices the more for God and Holy Church, desiring only that degree of glory which he has appointed for her. Her miseries and imperfections leave her calm and almost joyful.

Although detesting in itself the wrong which she has done, she can accept the fact of its commission and remain contented that the darkness of her sins should lighten and enhance by contrast the resplendency of grace and that Divine compassion which nought can make her doubt.

"Her will is not alone in being yielded up . . . her intellect and all her being are alike surrendered. She does not need precise and lengthy demonstrations to convince herself that God is making a demand on her, but weighs the call quite simply and with Christian honesty, observing to the utmost of her power the counsel of superiors. In every providential happening her course is clear; allowing for the difference between what God *permits* (which may in itself be evil) and what he *brings about* himself (which is invariably good), she takes whatever comes to her, submitting with a quiet heart. The same holds good of everything that is commanded or prescribed by rule; and where it is a case of grace's secret impulse and persuasion, her answer, while subservient to her spiritual advisers, is confident and direct. She knows that, in these matters, mathematical proof before embarking on a course of action is both needless and impossible to obtain; she does not think to find on earth the perfect radiancy of Heaven, esteeming more the mingled light and shade, those twilit realms of faith which, giving her a meaner and more truthful estimate of self, afford a reason for a blinder confidence in God and a more perfect measure of abandonment. She is, moreover, positive that God is competent to bring her to her goal, even when she appears to be advancing in a wrong direction. She is not given to undue retrospectiveness—where were the

use, indeed?—and never willingly succumbs to apprehension for the future; in fact, she might be said to be devoid of forethought. God is her vigilance and providence, and, to her mind, to-morrow, as to-day, is wholly at the pleasure of her Heavenly Father's will. She does not ask to see beyond, for where would be the profit? she cannot live two days in one. She shows no positive desire for anything which has not been illuminated by the light of God's good pleasure. All that is not irradiated by that sacred beam remains in shadow to her eyes, and is as nothing to her will. She struggles to avoid all contact with created things which are not, in her Master's words, "ascended to the Father"[1]—that is to say, which are not divinised through being lit by faith and consecrated for her by the Heavenly Father's Will. But once a thing is so divinely consecrated and illumined, she embraces it with fervour and a passionate adherence; for love is of the essence of her state, and is the secret of her outward unconcern. It is because her life, withdrawn completely from all else, is wholly concentrated in her love that it is full of power. This soul, apparently so cold, is moved to the core at every touch of God's directing Will. Just as an infant, waking out of sleep, stretches his arms out to his mother, so the soul smiles at every wish of God and clasps it to her in devout affection. With her, docility is quick with energy, indifference imbued with love. She is, towards God, a living declaration of assent. Her every breath and every step express a passionate *Amen,* which joins and harmonises with the heavenly *Amen.*"[2]

[1] John xx, 17.
[2] Mgr. Gay, *La Vie et les Vertus chrétiennes: De l'abandon à Dieu,* t. ii, pp. 77, 378-381.

All things considered, then, abandonment is found in total losing of our own will in the Will of God, in loving, filial, confident surrender of our life into his hands, in perfect, sanctified indifference, preparing us for the acceptance of all crosses ere they come, inviting us to bless them when they do appear and causing us to sing a hymn of thanksgiving when they have chastened us.

"Abandonment," says Bossuet, in writing on the states of prayer, "is an accumulation and a compound of most perfect acts of faith, supremest hope, and love of the purest and most constant." Abandonment is neither the aloof indifference of the blasé whom nothing can affect because his nature is incapable of thrilling to the touch of pain or joy; nor the completely barren passiveness of Quietists, who place perfection in a ceaseless state of contemplation which nothing can disturb, claiming no effort in the practice of the virtues; but rather is a supernatural attitude, active and passive, glad and enthusiastic, devout and loving, all at once, inspiring its possessor always and in all conditions, whether happy or unhappy, to breathe those words of resignation, deference, and joy desired by God: *Ecce! Fiat! Amen! Alleluia!* "Ask nothing and refuse him nothing," wisely says S Francis de Sales. "Or let this be your prayer: All that you will, my God, both as you will and how you will, whether in joy or through the cross, but always, nevertheless, in peace, provided that you give me grace to correspond with the conditions of our love."

A soul so speaking will, in consequence, secure a measure of abandonment which nothing can disturb and no amount of suffering destroy; which keeps its calmness in the midst of difficulties, slanders,

calumnies, dissensions, persecutions, and interior trials; which suffers uncomplainingly, weeps silently, smiles through its tears, and has but one desire—always to hold itself in that one attitude God wills for it.

For its attainment it is clear that self must be renounced and stripped of all that is not God. The soul must follow Jesus in the way to Calvary, showing herself, as Jesus did, obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross!

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Here, therefore, is a reason for affirming without hesitation that abandonment must be the attitude of the victim soul. But even so opinions differ. Some place the victim state before abandonment, maintaining that abandonment is loftiest of all the levels in the supernatural order, incapable of being surpassed; while others set the victim state beyond abandonment, because this state involves, it seems, a self-determined going forward which exceeds the practice of abandonment. Some writers even go so far as to affirm that the victim life must be in opposition to the practice of abandonment, and *vice versa*.

With no desire to quash the argument, we may perhaps be suffered to remark upon it.

And first, *is victim life in opposition to abandonment?* The answer would appear to be that it is not, and to convince ourselves of this it is sufficient to remember the distinction which the masters of the spiritual life have drawn between the so-called will signified and will of good pleasure. The will signified is that which is made plain to us by God's commandments, the orderings of the Church and of the duties

of our state, the evangelical counsels, the secret inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and the holy rule and constitutions of their order for those whose lives are consecrated to God's service in the cloister. The will of God's good pleasure, on the other hand, is manifested to us through exterior happenings.[1] Submission to the will signified is called obedience, whereas submission to the will of his good pleasure is nothing other than abandonment. Who, then, can fail to see that these submissions, far from being contradictory, may act together on an equal footing, since they both result in a capitulation to the Heavenly Will?

S Francis has, moreover, said, in this connection, that "there are circumstances wherein God's Will signified must be conjoined to the will of his good pleasure,"[2] giving as illustration an illness in the course of which submission (in other words, abandonment) is made to the will of good pleasure by patience and self-abnegation, accepting all with generosity—and also to the will signified (here we have obedience) by taking remedies or rest prescribed by doctors or superiors.

Acknowledgement of this distinction throws fresh light upon the matter. The offering of self as victim is indeed the same as acquiescence in the will signified, or obedience, for, as we have written elsewhere,[3] the vocation to the victim life is a particular and individual calling of the Holy Spirit, inviting certain persons, usually living in holy self-abandonment, to immolate themselves entirely in order to respond to

[1] S Francis de Sales, *Love of God,* bk. viii, ch. x to xiii.
[2] *Idem,* bk. ix, ch. vi.
[3] Part II, Ch. IV, "The Victim Vocation and Vow."

one or all of the four ends of sacrifice: adoration, thanksgiving, petition or atonement. Response to such a call is therefore acting in obedience, since the will signified is shown to us: (1) Through the commands of God, or the Church and the duties of our state; (2) through the evangelical counsels; (3) *through the secret inspirations of the Holy Ghost* —and the vocation to the victim life, as understood by us, is one of these; (4) through their holy rule and constitutions for those living in the cloister. So, as obedience, according to S Francis de Sales, is not antagonistic to abandonment, it is impossible to see wherein the victim life could fail to be consistent with the practice of abandonment.

A fruitful source of error lies in the belief that ordinarily abandonment is wholly passive and suppresses supernatural initiative in those who practise it. But such a way of looking at abandonment is surely Quietist or semi-Quietist? According to the Catholic meaning of the term, abandonment does not require complete passivity, nor does it paralyse the exercise of zeal. It claims submission to the will of God's good pleasure, and fulfilment of that will, without resisting the will signified.

It is perhaps as well to state that when we speak of victims we have no intention of referring to those reckless and presumptuous souls who, treating a vocation from the Holy Ghost and the control of a director as superfluous, embark, upon their own responsibility, upon these difficult seas. Such souls are victims only in their own imagination, not from the supernatural point of view. In order to become a victim it is necessary to be called thereto by God, and only after this and with the consent of the director, to take the step

of making a decisive offering as a victim or the victim vow. Only when looking at the question from this angle can it be allowable to say that victim life and the practice of abandonment are not antagonistic to each other, for there is never any opposition between obedience and abandonment.

We now come to the question of the relative positions of abandonment and of the victim state. Which of these states precedes the other?

Here, again, contentions seem to rise from want of accurate teaching or from inadequate distinction. Confront the two opinions and they would appear to be irreconcilable. But may we not settle the discussion through conciliation by stating that the victim soul must ever live in full abandonment and that the victim state neither precedes nor follows after it but is abandonment's associate and parallel? This answer, though at first sight paradoxical, is, notwithstanding, in accordance with the supernatural facts.

To understand it we must further analyse the problem and pursue it to the end.

When does vocation to the victim life appear? In other words, at what particular moment does a soul receive the call from God to offer herself as victim for the fulfilment through the ages of the Saviour's Passion, and to associate herself in intimate manner with the redeeming Sacrifice? The call comes, ordinarily,[1] at the culmination of the spiritual life, at

[1] We purposely say "ordinarily," because there may be cases wherein God calls certain souls at the beginning of the spiritual life and leads them on directly to accept and will to do his pleasure. But cases such as these are altogether the exception, and generally vocation to the victim state does not appear before the highest levels of the supernatural life, when souls are well advanced towards perfection.

that particular moment when the soul, having attained to the entire forsaking of her personal will, has formed the habit of submission to the will of God's good pleasure by practising abandonment. Because of this, most authors have assigned the victim state a later place than that which they have given to abandonment.

But when God calls a soul to greater immolation, inviting one who is already living in abandonment to walk in the victim way, does he suggest thereby that she should leave the practice of abandonment? Most certainly not. The soul responding to his call is simply rendering obedience to the will signified (the secret inspiration of the Holy Ghost) without departing from the will of his good pleasure (shown in outward happenings). These wills, as we have seen, are not opposed, for there can be no enmity between obedience and abandonment. Therefore the soul who gives herself as victim at the call of God, is not departing from abandonment.

We give below the actual phases of the process in their chronological order: (1) The soul lives in abandonment; (2) God asks her to present herself as victim; (3) the soul, to please him, presses on towards the supernatural holocaust; and (4) having made the offering, continues, as before, to exercise abandonment, through meet acceptance of the trials brought upon her by the victim life. In fine, while she *habitually* conforms herself to the will of good pleasure, she renders *present and direct* obedience to an injunction of the will signified, without relinquishing abandonment. After her victim offering and vow, she must persist in her abandonment, and this is why we have affirmed already that absolute abandonment is the undoubted attitude of the victim soul.

So, then, the victim state is neither earlier nor later than abandonment, but simply is adapted to it. Our work, the *Ascetical Ascent of the Love of God,*[1] places the victim's love above the love of abandonment, because in a classification of the different forms of the love of God each form must necessarily have its own position, but there was no intention of aggrandising the victim state or standing, to the disadvantages of abandonment. We do not claim to settle the dispute by means of these remarks, but only bring our contribution towards the solving of the problem, leaving a free hand to more able writers in the final task of making a decisive judgement and pronouncement.

* * * * *

Such arguments apart, we counsel victim souls desiring to make full response to their vocation to keep themselves perpetually in an unchanging attitude of abandonment. Like Jesus they must immolate themselves to God's good pleasure, accepting every trial which may come to them. Like Mary, by her constant meekness and docility associated with him in the mysteries of his life, they must be ever ready to pronounce their *fiat*. Like S John at the Last Supper, leaning on his Heavenly Master's breast, they, too, must lovingly repose upon the Saviour's Heart to know its Will. This attitude will subsequently give them strength for the ascent of Calvary when their turn arrives, to take their part in the great sacrifice of Jesus Crucified. And if, by constant application in responding to the Will of God, they turn their whole life into a supernatural holocaust, they may, in their last hour, repeat with all sincerity those words which

[1] London: Harding and More, 1925.

Jesus uttered to his Father immediately before his death: "Father! Into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

Their line of conduct must be constantly determined by abandonment, and since some authors offer "acts" or formulas for the encouragement of souls to bring this virtue into all the details of their daily life, we cannot bring this chapter to a better close than by the following of their example. We therefore quote the acts made by S Jane de Chantal and by the Ven. Fr. Pignatelli, who, in a few short sentences, present the essence of the doctrine.

"O sovereign goodness of the sovereign Providence of my God," S Chantal writes, "I here abandon myself into thy hands for ever! Be gentle with me or be stern, but lead me henceforth where thou wilt. I shall not heed the ways by which thou takest me, but only thee who guidest me, O my God. My soul finds no repose outside the arms and bosom of that Heavenly Providence, which is my mother and my might and my defence. For this cause I resolve, with thy Divine assistance, to carry out thy wishes and commands, not weighing or examining the reasons why thou choosest one course of action rather than another, but blindly, confidently, following thy Heavenly Will, regardless of my private inclinations. This, then, is my determination, to leave to thee all doing, taking no part in it beyond reposing in thine arms, desiring nought but what thou dost prompt me to desire, beseeching thee to bless it, O my God, and undertaking all in the assurance of thy goodness, generosity, and mercy, putting unbounded confidence in thee and none whatever in my own illimitable misery and fraility."

The Ven. Fr. Pignatelli's act is possibly more fitting still for victim souls to use, by reason of the nature of the secret union with the saving Christ which it commends. "My God," it runs, "I know not what this day shall hold in store. I am in total ignorance of what shall come to me. But I most surely know that there can happen to me nought that thou hast not foreseen, appointed, and ordained from all eternity, and this suffices me. Adoring thine eternal and inscrutable designs, I bow myself to them with all my heart. I will them all, accept them all, and join my sacrifice to that of Jesus Christ, my Heavenly Saviour, imploring of thee, in his Name and through his infinite merits, the grace of patience in my sufferings as well as perfect and complete submission in whatever comes to me according to thy Will. Amen!"

CHAPTER II

THE WEAPONS OF THE VICTIM SOUL

THE "victim soul," uniting herself to Jesus on the Mount of Calvary and to his Mother at the Cross, in order to fulfil the saving Sacrifice throughout the ages, has only one desire: to give God glory and effect the saving of men's souls.

To carry out her purpose she must use the means adapted to this end. To give herself as an oblation for the supernatural holocaust, and afterwards remain inert, is not sufficient; it is essential, on the contrary, to realise the victim state in concrete fashion, working towards its permanent consolidation. The victim state, in truth, as we have seen already, is, at the same time, both an active and a passive state. From souls which earnestly aspire to it, it claims, besides the passive attitude required for the acceptance of the trials of the spiritual life, a constant, active effort in the performance of the duties of the Christian state. On this particular aspect of the victim life—namely, the active side, we mean to concentrate throughout this chapter, reserving for the two which follow our consideration of that aspect which is purely mystical or passive.

What are the weapons of the victim soul? In other words, what means must she employ in order to attain her end? As has been indicated earlier in this work, they may be gathered under the three headings of prayer and suffering and zeal, and we will here

examine these three types of weapon from the supernatural point of view.

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First, then, we deal with Prayer. We need not here remind ourselves of all the generalities concerning it. Prayer is defined by S Augustine as "the soul's affectionate looking towards God,"[1] by S John Chrysostom as "a colloquy with God,"[2] and by S John Damascene as "the soul's ascent towards God."[3]

That prayer is obligatory for the victim soul is easily understood, because her function is to join herself to Jesus the Great Victim in his prayer and sacrifice. "Watch ye: and pray that ye enter not into temptation,"[4] he said to his Apostles in Gethsemani. "We ought always to pray and not to faint,"[5] was his assertion in his public life. "Amen, amen, I say to you . . . whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do."[6] "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."[7] So, then, according to the Saviour, prayer is efficacious by itself, and victim souls who confidently plead with God for the enlargement of his glory and the welfare of men's souls, will have their supplications answered in proportion to their merits.

Although it is unnecessary to recall the generalities which apply to prayer, we may observe with profit how our prayer itself may be developed and made

[1] *Serm.* IX, 3.
[2] *Hom.* 30 *in Gen.*
[3] *De Fid. orth.*, l. 3, c. 24.
[4] Matt. xxvi, 41.
[5] Luke xviii, 1.
[6] John xiv, 13.
[7] Luke xi, 9, 10.

perfect. Prayer is of several kinds: vocal, in which the body has an equal portion with the spirit; mental, or meditation, wherein the intellect retains the foremost place; affective prayer, in which the heart performs the leading role; and, lastly, mystical prayer or contemplation. The last will not be dealt with in this present chapter, which concerns itself exclusively with active aspects of the victim life, but mystical prayer shall be considered later. We here content ourselves with the remark that, of the first three forms of prayer, vocal, mental, and affective, the last is the most beautiful and fruitful, potent to bring souls rapidly to greater love of God, and yet too often disregarded by the many, who stop at vocal prayer or meditation.

In consequence, the victim soul must not be satisfied with vocal prayer—although she should make use of it at stated times, since it is fitting that the body should participate in prayer—neither should she be wholly occupied with the discursive method, wherein the intelligence, reflecting on the greater truths, assimilates them that it may acquire a christianised mentality. She must go further still, praying, above all, with her heart in the *affective prayer* which will augment her love for God.

It is unnecessary here to speak at length upon this kind of prayer, which may be found described in various manuals. Enough to state that the important business of the soul is not to dwell upon religious truths as in the prayer of meditation, but rather to attach herself immediately to God through the affections. In affective prayer the soul makes use of certain thoughts which serve as groundwork for her prayer, and then proceeds to concentrate directly on the object of her love. Without much troubling about the use

of books, she loves more than she thinks and has but one desire: to rest in silence that she may the better savour the delights of her Beloved.

Such prayer, though ordinarily full of sweetness, is not exempt from suffering in every case. It may, on the contrary, produce distressing pain by causing greater love for God.

Sometimes the soul endures in it excessive sorrow for her past misdeeds, sometimes it makes her suffer through the longing to acquire a virtue which appears too difficult to practise, or again, may cause her to shed bitter tears when she regards the Passion of our Lord. These divers sufferings produce in her most excellent results, encouraging to greater faithfulness in serving God. The first kind gives, besides the potent dread of sin, a vehement hatred of the world; the second sows humility in souls and, little by little, wins the longed-for virtue; the third produces generally increased devotion to the Cross.

It would indeed appear that this affective prayer, with all its evident advantages, is most particularly fitting for the victim soul. But, nevertheless, if she desires still further to intensify her piety, she will employ, besides affective prayer, *the practice of the presence of God.*

This practice, eulogised by all the Saints, consists in a perpetual recollection of our God as living in the soul by grace. Most sanctifying in itself, it is not gained without endeavour on our part, for, being an acquired habit, the performance of a multitude of acts is indispensable for its attainment: acts whose accomplishment demands a certain effort. But if, in the early stages, it requires a constant watchfulness, what sweetness it imparts to souls who dedicate themselves to its

acquirement! They live in constant nearness to the Holy Trinity, dwell in God's Presence and experience the raptures of his Heavenly love.

Amongst the ways most suited for the acquirement of this practice of God's Presence, writers of spiritual works commend a recollectedness of mind and the employment of ejaculatory prayer.

That it is necessary to *recollect one's self* in order to arrive at such a way of life is scarcely to be wondered at, for, compassed round with all the vain, confusing clamour of the world, the spirit may be very easily absorbed in outward restlessness, whereas in silence it can rest more readily in God. Though, certainly, she may not always find withdrawal from the world convenient, the soul must strive, in spite of every obstacle, to fashion for herself a kind of solitude amidst the tumult of her daily life. In this she will be following in the footsteps of S Catherine of Siena who, thwarted by her parents in the exercise of her devotions, created in the secret places of her soul an inward cell where she might dwell with her Beloved.

Ejaculatory prayers are, as their name suggests, a kind of spiritual dart shot upwards by the soul towards her God, and are an equally productive method of developing the practice of his Presence. They are composed of fervent words, of pious aspirations and upliftings of the heart, which mount perpetually towards Almighty God. They are especially commended by S Francis de Sales to every soul which aims at true devotion.

"Be sure," he says to Philothea, in the *Introduction to a Devout Life,* "that if your spirit once acquires the habit of familiar intercourse with God, it soon will find itself grown redolent of his perfections.

And this need cause no special trouble, for the practice may conveniently be blended with the world's affairs and occupations, the latter suffering not at all from the amalgamation. What is, in fact, required of us, either in our withdrawals or in ejaculatory prayer, is nothing but a brief and humble lifting of the heart to God, and such a practice, far from fettering or constraining our activity, promotes and forwards it. The pilgrim, swallowing a little wine to cheer his heart and cool his lips, stays for a moment, it is true, but does not thereby lose his time; for, by his draught, he gathers a fresh store of vigour for his journey, and only pauses that he may go forward with a quickened courage."[1]

Thus understood, the practice of the Presence of God conduces to a wonderful development of the spirit of prayer. In this familiar intercourse the soul is inundated by her consciousness of God, forming in her a supernatural atmosphere wherein she may unfold and grow in bliss. From this surpassing joy arose S Francis of Assisi's cry of love: "My God and my All!" in this it was that S Teresa iterated her device: "God only!" and that S Francis Xavier, all consumed with love Divine, repeated with the tenderest affection: "O Most Holy Trinity!"

The victim soul who is to make of her existence a perpetual prayer united to the prayer of Jesus in his Victim Life, must therefore by this means augment her piety. Let her resort to prayer from no desire to find enjoyment in it but as a place of meeting with her God. Let her devote herself not merely to the vocal forms of prayer, nor yet to meditation only, but to affective prayer and to the practice of the Presence

[1] Part II, Ch. XIII.

of God. And so, immersed in the interior life, she will become all-powerful with the heart of God Almighty, and able to contribute both towards his glory and the saving of the souls of men.

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And prayer, in the victim soul, must be combined with *Suffering*. Jesus not only prayed throughout his Life, he also sacrificed himself on Calvary, stretching his Arms out lovingly upon the hard wood of the Cross.

Suffering! How often men refuse it or make of it a pretext for blaspheming God, when it should rather earn their thankful blessings!

Clearly, beneath whatever form it may present itself, it will appear abhorrent, because it seems to set itself against the expression of our nature. But though, at first, it may appear disturbing, yet the fact remains that, to the eye of faith, it is revealed, not as an evil to be feared and shunned, but as a good to be desired and cherished. Martyrs and Saints, so far from scorning suffering, have lauded it and sought it with enthusiastic fervour.

In order to appreciate its beauty we must call to mind its origin, search out its meaning, and discover how it may acquire a true supernatural fruitfulness.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were ignorant of pain. Created in a state of sanctity and bliss, they knew no suffering whether of body or mind or heart. They dwelt in the the earthly Paradise, enfolded in a peace to all appearances unending.

Unhappily, persuaded by the spirit of evil, they sinned and lost at one fell blow the whole of their

prerogatives. Before the Fall they had possessed supernatural life, preternatural gifts, and all the benefits of nature; but after the commission of that primal sin they were condemned to everlasting death, deprived of preternatural gifts, and found their faculties impaired. To harmony and order, peace and joy, succeeded turmoil, chaos, desolation, and disaster.

For man, then, suffering did not appear till after the first sin. To Eve, who had incited Adam to partake of the forbidden fruit, God said: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," and to Adam, who had also disobeyed, it was decreed that: "Cursed is the earth in thy work . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Thus had begun that expiation which should weigh so heavily on all the human race throughout the ages.

But side by side with this entirely negative and penitential character, pain does possess a positive and fruitful aspect. From being expiatory and reparatory it has become a transforming and a sanctifying power, for though in the first place pain is present in the Heavenly scheme as the sanction and the punishment of sin, by means of the astounding metamorphosis which Jesus has effected, it has become the source of our redemption. Through it Christ saves us, and through it we, too, must bring about our own salvation. So, after having been the consequence of sin, the outcome of our going astray and issue of our insurrection, it now reveals itself as the starting-point of rehabilitation, the factor of our restoration, the agent of our sanctification. From being once a fatal consequence, it has become a noble cause, and we, by virtue of this transformation, may seek for it and bless

it. Because of this, the victim soul, endeavouring to make response to her vocation, will cultivate a love of suffering and make of it her life's companion.

We may be asked, in this connection, what kind of sufferings we have in mind. This chapter being concerned exclusively with the active aspect of the victim life, we must confine ourselves to the consideration of those sufferings which the Christian soul inflicts upon herself, for the development of supernatural life and for the acquiring of abundant merits.

Besides the crosses laid on us by God according to the wisdom of his Heavenly Providence, affecting mind and body, heart and soul—distinctive crosses which we shall consider later with the passive aspect of the victim soul—are others which the generous take upon themselves, and which are known as mortifications or, more properly speaking, corporal penances. The expression "mortification" has a limited meaning, and denotes, according to its etymological interpretation, those practices whose object is to put to death the evil element within us, that the good may freely grow and reach perfection. Whereas the expression "corporal penances" goes a great deal further, signifying practices which have the deepening of the spiritual life as their especial function. Such corporal penances play a triple role: the subjugation of the flesh and taming of the passions, which, properly speaking, is the task of mortification, the expiation and atonement, through a willing sacrifice, for past misdeeds, and the acquiring—either for the soul herself or others—of abundant merit through supplementary sufferings. Under this latter aspect we must seek to learn the productivity of pain. Let us, then, pause and scrutinise those supererogatory

crosses or corporal penances which victim souls may take upon themselves.

Of these are penances commended to her children by the Church, or those exacted from their members by Religious Orders. Fasting and abstinence must take the foremost place, to which in former times were added vigils, when, before a solemn festival, the faithful occupied the greater portion of the night in singing praise to God, and which, in our day, are replaced by the nocturnal adorations of the Most Holy Sacrament. Besides these customs there are certain attitudes of prayer, such as humble kneeling, prostration on the ground, and stretching of the arms out cross-wise, all practices conducing to humility and having the immense advantage of uniting us with Jesus in his sufferings, either as agonising in the Garden or else upon the instrument of bitter torment on the Mount of Calvary.

Besides the penances described above are those consisting of the wearing next the skin of penitential instruments or garments, or the taking of the discipline.

The penitential garment most in favour has always been the cilice or hair shirt. Composed of hempen strands and coarse hair interwoven, the cilice is arranged in two large squares united in the manner of a scapular and covering back and breast. The instruments of penance may consist of metal chains, whose links, bent backwards into points, sink deep into the skin, although it does not follow of necessity that blood is drawn. They can be worn as cinctures round the body, arms, or legs, from whence they take their names of girdles and of bracelets, the ornaments and jewels of the spiritual life to souls most truly mortified.

The discipline, a whip of many thongs, is formed of slender chains attached to one of heavier links which serves to grip and swing it by, or may be made of knotted cords, occasionally tipped with iron points. This instrument is used to scourge the fleshy portions of the body with force and frequency, in memory of the Scourging of our Heavenly Master.

It can be hardly necessary to remark that all these pious practices, though excellent in themselves, must be controlled by judgment and discretion; for capable as they are of being a source of merit, they can no less become productive of the gravest dangers.

The first of these lies in exhaustion of the body beyond a lawful limit. Certain ascetic persons, having failed to curb their ardour, have become unable to endure the mildest mortifications or to fulfil the commonest duties of the Christian life. Restraint, in these directions, is most certainly to be preferred before excess. With reference to this subject, S Francis de Sales has said: "Far better, as a general rule, to save more bodily strength than may be needed, than to destroy a greater measure of it than we should; for it is always easy to diminish it when necessary, whereas it is not always possible to repair it when we find we want it most."[1]

Another danger lurks in the temptation to extract, from mortifications such as these, vain sentiments of personal gratification, which might easily result in a disastrous downfall. The history of the Church exhibits many instances of penitents who, growing proud of their austerities, sank afterwards to grossest sensual wickedness, since God would not allow them so to found their virtue on presumption.

[1] *Devout Life*, part iii, ch. xxiii.

For the avoidance of such dangers, victim souls must never follow personal inclination in these practices, but must defer to the decisions of a director. Some souls, moreover, must forego such penances because of feeble health, but they are not less capable of being victims in a supereminent degree. God marks the infirm and sickly in a special manner with the seal of the Cross.

To such as these, interior mortification, much to be preferred to corporal penance, is alone permitted. They need not therefore be distressed by reason of their situation, for if they will accept with courage all the pains which God has laid upon them and which call for their perpetual generosity, they will be pleasing him far better than they could by any self-inflicted penances, however violent and cruel.

Therefore, as should be clear enough from the above remarks, it is by no means our intention to affirm that every victim soul must necessarily dedicate herself to corporal penances. God is the Master of his creatures, and his it is to apportion to each one the part which he or she must take in their collaboration in the work of saving souls. Of some he asks for generosity and fervour in the mortification of the body; of others patient sweetness in the acceptance of the crosses which he calls on them to bear. The perfect way is not to choose a cross ourselves, but to submit to that which God has chosen for us. The important point is that we should possess a love of suffering and love it in the way demanded of our love by God.

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Lastly, to prayer and suffering must be added *Zeal*. As it is her ambition to contribute to God's glory and

to save men's souls, the victim soul will finally achieve this end through exercising her apostolate, fruitful according to the measure in which she has prepared for it by prayer and sacrifice.

There is, in zeal, no sort of opposition to the complete unfolding of the victim life. Doubtless, the spirit of sacrifice is the predominating characteristic of that life, but souls exist who can combine, like Jesus, piety, suffering, and zeal.

The last, moreover, is but charity in one particular form. It shows itself in searching for and putting into practise all the most excellent ways of reaching souls, in order that they may, through greater holiness, bring glory to Almighty God. S Francis de Sales defines it as "the ardency of charity," because its aims are the eternal interests of its God and of its neighbour.

Let victim souls, then, exercise themselves in zeal; but always with a supernatural end in view. For zeal, in order to produce pre-eminent results, must be entirely supernatural in its origin, its object, its methods, and its ends.

The origin of zeal is *supernatural* if it is of God; its object, if it tends directly to the good of souls; its methods, if depending more on Heavenly aid than on its own activities; its end, if it indeed procures God's glory and the gain of souls. The true apostle acts on highest Christian grounds alone. In his apostolate he does not seek for the esteem or praise which might accrue to him through his achievements, but only heeds the interests of God. He loves repeating with the Psalmist: *Non nobis, Domine, sed nomini tuo da gloriam!*—"Not to us, O Lord . . . but to thy name give glory!" Were he to work with human

ends in view he would be compassing his condemnation, and could expect no payment to reward his labour, for, like the Pharisee depicted in the Gospels, who prayed and fasted and gave alms in public "to be seen of men," he would in this world only have his recompense.

All zeal, then, must be supernatural.

It must as well be *fervent*—that is to say, it must maintain its glowing ardour in each circumstance of life. In this we have our Master as example. Likening himself to that good shepherd who, in seeking his lost sheep, takes no account of hurts sustained himself in rescuing it from the enemy, he humbled himself and suffered, and at last gave up his life upon the Cross to ransom souls. Here is the genuine spirit of sacrifice for victim souls to imitate.

And equally must zeal be *prudent*, wisely guided and controlled by reason and by faith.

How many apostolic workers fail, alas! for lack of common sense or tact or knowledge of psychology. Some ask too much of souls, urging upon them heights of sanctity when all the time they are not called to rise beyond an ordinary level of perfection. And others, on the contrary, remain in the narrow confines which they should have overstepped and suffer souls to stagnate in the lower stages of the spiritual life. Before approaching others we must have a right discernment and avoid all reckless plunging into undertakings which, though excellent in themselves, may miss their mark through being ill-adapted to the persons or the circumstances to be dealt with.

In all work of a supernatural character one special pitfall must be shunned: the inclination to advance too quickly and in unseemly manner to forestall the

work of God. The apostle does not act alone, for he collaborates with grace, and thus it is that when God's action in the soul is manifest its impulse must be forwarded, whereas when grace appears to be opposed by evil dispositions in the soul to be converted or assisted, there must be readiness to wait in patience. Wishing to hasten matters heedless of the Holy Spirit's working is but to court an almost certain disappointment.

And lastly, zeal, in order to preserve its supernatural character, must *persevere*. It is, alas! too common to encounter souls inspired with large desires and seeming, by their natural qualities, intended to produce a plenteous harvest, but who, like Peter after the arrest of Jesus, leave their Master at the first appearance of adversity and, turning back, retrace their steps. The reason of such disappointments in the apostolic task is frequently because these souls have failed to grasp the meaning of their trial, nor have they understood that every supernatural work must necessarily bear the imprint of the seal of contradiction and the Cross.

In certain cases, strange to say, defeat may be the herald of success. That first Good Friday evening all seemed lost for Jesus and his cause, yet three days later he was risen glorious and triumphant from the grave. Like him, his victim souls must be prepared to accept their tribulations, and therefore let them leave their sum of merits in God's hands, without concern for possible results. While obviously refraining from all acts which, humanly speaking, might be prejudicial to success, they can remain unmoved in the event of failure, rejoicing in that God is smiling on their labours, since he is marking all their striving with the Cross, the symbol of salvation. And sooner or later he will crown their efforts, whose results will

be so much the greater for the pains that they have cost.

Such, broadly outlined, are the principles which must control the exercise of zeal, and victim souls inspired by them will reap a plenteous yield of supernatural fruits. But here again we must persist in warning souls that, as in the case of corporal mortifications, they must never give themselves to the apostolate except according to the Will of God. Some souls, indeed, must always be content to be apostles in remote and distant sort, through prayer and suffering, if God forbears, by reason of their calling, of their state of health or social station, to require of them an active office in the field of apostolic labour. Their duty, in such case, must be submission and the will to correspond, as well as in them lies, to God's good pleasure.

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So ends our brief description of the weapons with which victim souls may arm themselves in order to promote God's glory and to save men's souls. At the beginning of this chapter we have shown that some are capable of wielding them all three together, while others are unable to conduct a life of prayer, of zeal, and suffering all at once.

The course of action they should follow lies in doing whatsoever God may ask of them, according to their personal capacities and spiritual aspirations and in conformity with the conditions of their life.

There are, moreover, several kinds of victim. Some live the victim life by the exercise of prayer—victims of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving—others by constant suffering, and such are victims of atonement and

of supplication; others again by prayer and suffering and zeal, and these are victims of devotion, thanksgiving, petition, and expiation, who, after the example of their Master, prove in their lives the four great ends of sacrifice. It may be, in the light of these considerations, that some souls will be attracted to the whole perfection of the victim life. It is, in truth, a lovely and desirable ideal, but souls must be content to correspond with God's designs for them, without desiring to exceed the bounds of their vocation nor trying to accomplish that which Jesus has not laid upon their love.

Moreover, we have made a brief examination of the active aspect only of the victim life. There is another side to it, sublimer and more fruitful, wherein the soul's chief aim must be to lie quite still beneath the influence of God's activity. Holiness is attained by means of man's own efforts forwarded by God's concurrence, and this is just as true with regard to the victim state. Man must exert himself towards it by his individual efforts, but when he has done his part then God will crown the enterprise. So, after studying the active or ascetic section of the victim state, it is expedient to inquire into the life beneath its mystical or passive aspect. This we shall now proceed to do in our examination of the prayer and crosses of the victim soul.

CHAPTER III

THE PRAYER OF THE VICTIM SOUL

PROPORTIONATELY to the soul's advancement in perfection, the manner of her prayer transforms itself and tends to closer union with the Creator. Towards the termination of the spiritual life the soul no longer prays in ways which could suffice her at the beginning, for, by degrees, through force of use and exercise, her faculties incline towards God with greater ease and fervour.

As has been seen already, the great authorities on mysticism and asceticism place the diverse kinds of prayer in order of merit as follows: meditation, affective prayer, and contemplation. For meditation or discursive prayer is principally a mental exercise wherein the intellect considers truths revealed; affective prayer, a motion of the heart, seeking to find the object of its love; and contemplation, a reposing of the powers in God, impossible for man to purchase through his personal efforts, but brought about by God the Holy Ghost himself.

This latter form of prayer is that which we shall deal with in the following chapter, for it is only natural that victim souls, whose lives are spent in prayer and sacrifice, should be initiated in this heavenly way and that, at certain times, amidst their moral sufferings, God should permit them to experience the rapture of his Presence and the transports of his love.

But, nevertheless, grave difficulties must be faced in

this connection. The problem of contemplative or mystical prayer is being eagerly discussed to-day, and notwithstanding the great zeal with which conflicting views are urged by their protagonists, the controversy shows no sign of being definitely ended. Under the circumstances we identify ourselves with the traditional point of view and, while refusing to be drawn into the heat and vehemence of the dispute, endeavour to define contemplative prayer, noting its stages and describing all the dispositions it requires.

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Mystical prayer, or prayer of contemplation—more generally known as contemplation—is not, as some imagine, an extraordinary prayer belonging to the class of graces known as *gratis datae*—such as prophecy, the gift of tongues or miracles—in which the soul must needs have visions and revelations. It is an ordinary and normal prayer, to which all souls desirous of perfection may aspire.

A fact which often leads to misconceptions is that this prayer, produced by God himself, affords a certain meed of satisfaction of an exalted kind and is, moreover, passive in its manifestation, through quiet repose of all the powers of the soul, who, that she may the better taste these raptures and leave God free to act, must yield herself in full abandonment to the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit's gifts.

Nevertheless, although this prayer can never be produced by man, it must not, for this cause, be deemed miraculous. It may be rare, because for want of generosity souls fail to make sufficient preparation to receive it, or, by their selfishness and dissipation, set up a barrier in the way of its appearing, but, in

reality, it does not overstep the limits of the interior life. Indeed the contrary is true, for contemplation is the logical outcome of the inner life, and it may safely be affirmed that many souls might hear God's call to it, did they make ready to receive it by whole-hearted application of the laws of the Christian doctrine of asceticism.

Of what does this Contemplative Prayer consist?

Mystical writers have replied: In an exceptional passivity, simple attentiveness and loving union, resulting in a knowledge and infused love of God, accompanied by perception of his Presence felt experimentally. Hear what S John of the Cross, S Teresa, and S Francis de Sales, those masters of the subject, have to say.

S John of the Cross writes: "Mystical theology . . . is the secret science of God, which spiritual men call contemplation."[1] And in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* he says again: "The soul [which has arrived at contemplation] delights to be alone, waiting lovingly on God, without any particular considerations, in interior peace, quiet, and repose, when the acts and exercises of the understanding, memory, and will . . . have ceased. . . . The moment such a soul places itself in the presence of God, it makes an act of knowledge, confused, loving, peaceful, and tranquil."[2]

Elsewhere he says: "What the soul tastes now in this touch of God is, in truth, though not perfectly, a certain foretaste of everlasting life. . . . It is not incredible that it should be so when we believe, as

[1] *Spir. Cant.,* stan. xxvii. [The quotations from *St John of the Cross* and *St Teresa* in this chapter follow the Stanbrook translation (London, Thomas Baker).—Tr.]

[2] *Ascent,* bk. ii, ch. xiii, 3; ch. xiv, 2.

we do believe, that this touch is most substantial, and that the substance of God touches the substance of the soul. Many saints have experienced it in this life. The sweetness of delight which this touch occasions baffles all description. . . . There are no terms by which we can designate or explain the deep things of God transacted in perfect souls. The proper way to speak of them is for him who has been favoured with them to understand them, feel them, and enjoy them, and be silent. . . . Thus it may be truly said, 'Savouring of everlasting life.' For though the fruition of it is not perfect in this life as it will be in glory; nevertheless, the touch, being of God, savoureth of everlasting life, and accordingly the soul tastes in a marvellous manner, and by participation, of all the things of God; fortitude, wisdom, love, beauty, grace, and goodness being communicated unto it. Now as God is all this, the soul tastes of all in one single touch of God in a certain eminent way. And from this good bestowed upon the soul, some of the unction of the Spirit overflows at times into the body itself, penetrating into the very bones, as it is written, 'All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like unto thee'?"[1]

While using different terms to clothe her meaning, S Teresa is in full agreement with S John of the Cross. The human will, in contemplation, is in her opinion joined to the Will of God, and through this union tastes a genuine delight. Sometimes the understanding and imagination share the peace and quiet of the will, or, yet again, may be a prey to the vexations of involuntary distractions, without withdrawal of the will from being occupied with God.

[1] *Living Flame,* stan. ii, v. 4, §§ 22-24.

Moreover, S Teresa holds that contemplation is a Heavenly act, taking possession of the human will and filling it with inexpressible well-being. When this interior sweetness inundates the senses there ensues a veritable rapture, full and intimate, which S Teresa calls a taste of the Divine. The soul is conscious of the Presence of God and, in an ideal union, can enjoy the transports of this matchless love.

In *The Way of Perfection* S Teresa writes: "[Those who are favoured by our Lord with this particular grace] are happy without knowing why; the soul is inflamed with love without comprehending how it loves: it feels that it enjoys the Beloved, yet how it does so it cannot tell. It realises that this delight can never be gained through any desire of the mind itself: the will embraces its joy without apprehending how, yet it dimly perceives that every good work mankind could perform in this world could never merit such a reward, for it is the gift of the Lord of heaven and earth who gives it in the manner befitting his Godhead."[1] And she proceeds to note the difference which exists between contemplative prayer and visions—extraordinary phenomena which may be grafted on to contemplation, whose nature nevertheless remains unchanged. ["In contemplation,"] writes the Saint, "we seem, at the very commencement of our prayer, to find him with whom we would converse, and we seem to feel that he hears us by the effects and the spiritual impressions of great love and faith of which we are conscious, as well as by the good resolutions, accompanied by sweetness, which we then make. This is a great grace from God; and let him to whom he has given it esteem it much, because it is a

[1] *Way of Perfection,* ch. xxv, 1.

very high degree of prayer; but it is not vision. God is understood to be present there by the effects he works in the soul: that is the way his Majesty makes his presence felt."[1]

She then endeavours to be more explicit:

"But, you may ask, how can a person who is incapable of sight and hearing see [that she has been in God and God in her]? I do not say that she saw it at the time, but that she perceives it clearly afterwards, not by any vision, but by a certitude which remains in the heart which God alone could give. . . . If we did not see it, how can we feel so sure of it? That I do not know: it is the work of the Almighty and I am certain that what I say is the fact. . . . In all such matters we must not seek to know how things happened: our understanding could not grasp them, therefore why trouble ourselves on the subject? It is enough to know that it is he, the all-powerful God, who has performed the work."[2]

A like opinion is advanced by S Francis de Sales, who says of contemplation that it is nothing but "a loving, simple, and abiding spiritual attentiveness to Heavenly things."[3]

Describing the repose which souls enjoy while in this state of prayer, he shows the difference between the recollectedness of meditation or discursive prayer and that of contemplation, in the following terms: "I am not speaking here of that recollection whereby those who wish to pray deliberately place themselves in the Presence of God, withdrawing into themselves and, as it were, calling the soul back into the recesses

[1] *Life,* ch. xxvii, § 6.
[2] *Interior Castle,* 5th Mans., ch. i, § 9.
[3] *Love of God,* bk. vi, ch. 3.

of the heart to speak with God; for such a recollectedness is formed at the bidding of love, first urging us to pray, and then commending to us fitting means to do it well, so that we are ourselves responsible for this withdrawal of the spirit. But that other recollection of which I wish to treat is made, not at the bidding of love, but even by love itself—that is to say, we do not make it of our own free choice, for it remains outside our power to have it when we will, and is entirely independent of our care. God forms it in us, when he will, by his most holy grace."[1]

Again: "It sometimes happens that our Lord infuses imperceptibly within the heart a certain gentle sweetness which attests his Presence, and then the faculties, including even the external senses of the soul, by some mysterious consent, return towards that hidden intimate region where abides her most adorable and cherished Spouse."[2]

"The soul so recollected and withdrawn within herself in or before her God," the great Saint adds, "is sometimes so delightfully attentive to the excellence of her Beloved, that her attentiveness scarce seems attentiveness at all, so simply and so delicately is it exercised. Just as the current of some rivers is so smooth and quiet that to those who watch it or who float upon it there appears to be no movement, since no flow nor ripple is discernible. . . . At times, this rest is so profound in its tranquillity that the whole soul with all its powers remains as if asleep, with neither movement nor activity of any kind, except the operation of the will; and this itself does nothing but receive the joy and satisfaction flowing from the Presence of the Beloved. More wonderful still, the

[1] *Love of God,* bk. vi, ch. 7. [2] *Ibid.*

will enjoys this ease and deep content without perceiving it, insensibly rejoicing in its bliss, the more so since the soul thinks not of herself but of the One whose Presence gives her such delight. So, in like manner, does it often happen that, when roused from sleep, we only half hear what our friends are saying round us, or apprehend their gentle touches almost imperceptibly, without being sensible of what we feel.

"But, nevertheless, the soul which in this sweet repose rejoices in the delicate sensation of the Heavenly Presence, however blind she be to her delight, gives ample proof of how she cherishes and prizes it as soon as an attempt is made to take it from her or should anything divert her from her joy. The poor soul then complains, cries out, and even weeps like a little child awaked too soon, which, by its evident distress, reveals the satisfaction which its sleep afforded it. . . . The soul so tranquilly reposing in its God would not be tempted to forsake its rest for all the greatest prizes of this world."

Again, the holy Doctor writes: "Such was the quietude of blessed Magdalen, when, seated at the Master's feet, she listened to his sacred words. See her there, wrapped in profound tranquillity, without a word, a tear, a sob, a sigh, a movement, or a prayer. Martha, all eager haste, goes to and fro across the narrow chamber, but Mary heeds her not. What, then, is Mary busy with ? With nought; she simply listens. And what does her listening amount to? This, that in the likeness of an honoured vessel, she is there to catch the drops of sweetness, as of myrrh, falling from the Beloved's lips into her heart. The Heavenly Lover, jealous of the loving slumber and repose of his beloved, reproves her sister who would

strive to rouse her: 'Martha! Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen that best part, which shall not be taken away from her.'[1] What, then, was Mary's part or portion? Even to dwell in peace and quietness close to her sweet Jesus."[2]

We might continue to quote passages indefinitely, but such is far from our intention, our purpose being to give a brief description only of contemplative prayer. In summing up we may affirm with Canon Saudreau, no mean contributor towards the restoration of sound mystical theology to a place of honour, that the "foundation of contemplation is an intimate union of the heart with God, a loving union in no wise due to exact and reasoned considerations, but to a general and indistinct knowledge of God, which is a gift from the divine goodness. This union can persist amidst distractions of the imagination and digressions of the understanding; it brings a real happiness to the soul—a happiness which amounts at times to an overflowing delight, while at others it is merely an almost imperceptible, though none the less real, satisfaction."[3]

Such is the essence of true contemplation. As this exalted prayer is caused by God alone and man is totally incapable of producing it himself, we shall do well to ask at what particular moment of the spiritual life it manifests itself AND WHAT ARE THE PREPARATORY SIGNS WHICH HERALD ITS APPROACH.

It comes, so spiritual writers tell us, when the soul, wholly detached from sin, has generously practised

[1] Luke x. [2] *Love of God,* bk. vi, ch. 8.
[3] *The Degrees of the Spiritual Life,* bk. v, part i, ch. iii, Eng. trans., vol. ii, p. 21.

all the virtues, renounced herself in every way, and lives in a perpetual recollectedness. But certain signs announce its imminent advent, and these, according to S John of the Cross, are three in number.

The first, he writes in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel,* is "when he finds he cannot meditate nor exert his imagination, nor derive any satisfaction from it, as he was wont to do—when he finds dryness there, where he was accustomed to fix the senses and draw forth sweetness—then the time is come." . . .

The second sign is "when he sees that he has no inclination to fix the imagination or the senses on particular objects, exterior or interior. I do not mean when the imagination neither comes nor goes—for it is disorderly even in the most complete self-recollection—but only when the soul derives no pleasure from tying it down deliberately to other matters.

"The third sign is the most certain of the three—namely, when the soul delights to be alone, waiting lovingly on God, without any particular considerations, in interior peace, quiet, and repose, when the acts and exercises of the understanding, memory, and will, at least discursively . . . have ceased; nothing remaining except that knowledge and attention, general and loving, of which I have spoken, without the particular perception of aught else."[1]

Thus, then, the soul insensibly proceeds from meditation or affective prayer to contemplation, (1) when meditation has grown difficult or is no longer practicable; (2) when the soul feels no desire to focus the imagination on particular objects; and, above all, (3) when she takes delight in being alone with God, her fond attention firmly fixed on him. P.

[1] *Ascent,* bk. ii, ch. 13.

Garrigou-Lagrange remarks that to these signs there should be added, according to S Teresa, the total offering of self to God, despising of all earthly things, a great humility, and a desire for Heaven.

The soul thus totally despoiled and having an urgent need of close communion with the Divine, is generally led by God into the ways of contemplation. As victim souls, in order to conform to their vocation, must aim at this ideal of full renunciation and of union, we do not hesitate to affirm that, if they carry out the plan prepared for them, they, too, will find a place at that most holy banquet where God bestows himself in indescribable delights on those his creatures, wholly self-surrendered to his burning love.

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Contemplative prayer is thus a very lofty form of prayer, in which God makes his Presence felt and grants unspeakable joys to those who have the happiness to receive it.

But THERE ARE MANIFOLD STAGES IN THIS PRAYER, changing and modifying according to the depth of union between the soul and God and to the security wherewith its faculties are bound to the Divine.

Spiritual writers classify these stages differently, but all agree that in the main they may be gathered under three principal headings: prayer of quiet, simple union, and transforming union or spiritual marriage.

The Prayer of Quiet itself consists of three degrees: (1) passive recollection; (2) quiet, properly so-called; and (3) the slumber of the senses; not different prayers to S Teresa's mind, but varying expressions of the same.

In *supernatural passive recollection,* which must be carefully distinguished from active recollection brought about by man, God comes, as it were, to take the soul by surprise, not only during prayer, but even in the midst of the most ordinary occupations. Immediately the soul is, so to speak, cut off from her surroundings, absorbed by the thought—confused as yet but most intense—of the Presence of God. In this recollection, says S Teresa, "there is no occasion to retire nor to shut the eyes, nor does it depend on anything exterior; involuntarily the eyes suddenly close and solitude is found, without any labour of one's own . . . here it is not in our power to retire into ourselves, unless God gives us the grace."[1]

A further characteristic is that while the faculties are wholly concentrated upon God, they nevertheless can act and be directed by the will, unless they are put to sleep by God himself in the prayer of quiet. "In this prayer," S Teresa says again, "there is no suspension of the faculties and powers of the soul; it retains the full use of them; but the use of them is retained that they may be occupied with God."[2]

Quiet, properly so-called, lies in an interior peace, a resting of the powers in God. The great reformer of the Carmelites, whose works should always be referred to on this subject, has given us an admirable picture of it in *The Way of Perfection.* "I will try to tell you about the prayer of quiet, my daughters, as I have heard it explained or as our Lord has been pleased to make me understand it—perhaps in order that I might teach you. Here God seems to show us that he has

[1] *Interior Castle,* 4th Mans., ch. iii.
[2] Second *Relation* to Fr Alvarez, Rel. VIII, § 3.

heard our petition, and he begins to give us his Kingdom in this world, so that we may truly 'hallow' and bless 'His Name,' and try to make others do the same. . . .

"In some manner, in no way connected with the exterior senses, the spirit realises that it is close to its God, and that if it drew but a little nearer to him, it would become one with him by union. . . .

"This state resembles a swoon, both exterior and interior, so that the body does not wish to move, but rests like a traveller who, having nearly come to his journey's end, stops so that he may start again refreshed, for the strength of the soul is now double what it was. The body feels enjoyment while the spirit is supremely satisfied and so delighted at finding itself near the fountain that, before even tasting the water, its thirst is quenched and there seems nothing left to desire. The faculties are reluctant to stir; all action seems to impede their loving God—yet they are not entirely lost, for they can and do realise, by peaceful contemplation, in whose presence they are. Two of them are free; the will alone is captive, and if capable of feeling pain at this time, can only do so at the thought that it will regain its liberty.

"The mind centres itself on one thing only and works but little, and the memory tries to remember nothing else, for both see that this is 'the one thing needful,' and that anything else disturbs them. At such a time people wish the body to remain motionless; they think its movement would destroy their repose, therefore they dare not stir. Speaking troubles them; they spend an hour in saying one *Pater Noster;* being very close to God, they know that he understands them by signs. They are in the palace and near

their King, and they perceive that here on earth he is beginning to bestow on them his Kingdom.

"At times they shed a few tears, not sadly but with extreme sweetness: their only wish is that the name of God may be 'hallowed.' They seem no more to belong to this world—they neither wish to look at nor to listen to aught but God; nothing troubles them, nor does it seem as if anything could do so again. In short, while the prayer of quiet lasts, the soul is so intoxicated with delight and joy that there no longer seems anything left to wish for, and it would gladly cry with S Peter: 'Lord, let us build here three tabernacles.'"[1]

Yet, as S Teresa teaches, the will alone is held a captive in this prayer. The other faculties, reserving their activity, may trouble and importune it, but it remains attached to God and seems to slumber, neither sound asleep nor yet awake, inversely to what passes in the third degree of prayer, the *slumber of the powers,* according to the Saint of Avila.

She says, in effect, that "out of this prayer [of quiet] comes usually what is called a sleep of the faculties; but they are not so absorbed nor so suspended as that it can be called a trance; nor is it altogether union."[2]

This third degree of prayer is "a sleep of the powers of the soul, which are not wholly lost, nor yet understanding how they are at work. The pleasure, sweetness, and delight are incomparably greater than in the former state of prayer [of quiet]; and the reason is, that the waters of grace have risen up to the neck of the soul, so that it can neither advance nor retreat—

[1] *Way of Perfection,* ch. xxxi, §§ 1-3.
[2] Second *Relation* to Fr Alvarez, Rel. VIII, § 5.

nor does it know how to do so; it seeks only the fruition of exceeding bliss. It is like a dying man with the candle in his hand, on the point of dying the death desired. It is rejoicing in this agony with unutterable joy; to me it seems to be nothing else but a death, as it were, to all the things of this world, and a fruition of God. I know of no other words whereby to describe it or to explain it; neither does the soul then know what to do—for it knows not whether to speak or be silent, whether it should laugh or weep. It is a glorious folly, a heavenly madness, wherein true wisdom is acquired; and to the soul a kind of fruition most full of delight."[1]

This form of prayer, however, is but the prayer of quiet intensified. "I knew well enough," the Saint continues, "that it was not altogether the union of all the faculties, and yet most certainly it was higher than the previous state of prayer." Again she says: "The faculties are almost all completely in union, yet not so absorbed that they do not act."[2]

In fact, the dominant characteristic of these three first forms of prayer is that they are incompletely passive: that in them God takes possession of the will, and sometimes also of the other powers, in a lower degree which does not make them wholly captive. "I believe that in this case," says S Teresa, "the powers of the soul are not united to God, but are absorbed and astounded at the marvel before them. . . . I believe that in this case the will must in some way be united with that of God."[3] Thus, in this primary class of prayer, the will alone is bound to him and has perception of the union. The other powers, the intellect and

[1] *Life,* ch. xvi. [2] *Life,* ch. xvi.
[3] *Interior Castle,* 4th Mans., ch. ii, § 6.

memory, are either free or sometimes dormant as in a gentle slumber.

In the *prayer of union,* the second great division of contemplative prayer, the case is very different. "Do not imagine," S Teresa writes, "that this state of prayer is, like the one preceding it, a sort of drowsiness (I call it 'drowsiness' because the soul seems to slumber, being neither quite asleep nor wholly awake). In the prayer of union the soul is asleep, fast asleep, as regards the world and itself; in fact, during the short time this state lasts, it is deprived of all feeling whatever, being unable to think on any subject, even if it wished. No effort is needed here to suspend the thoughts; if the soul can love, it knows not how, nor whom it loves, nor what it desires. In fact, it has died entirely to this world, to live more truly than ever in God. This is a delicious death, for the soul is deprived of the faculties it exercised while in the body; delicious because (although not really the case) it seems to have left its mortal covering to abide more entirely in God. So completely does this take place, that I know not whether the body retains sufficient life to continue breathing; on consideration, I believe it does not; at any rate, if it still breathes, it does so unconsciously. The mind entirely concentrates itself on trying to understand what is happening, which is beyond its power; it is so astounded that, if consciousness is not completely lost, at least no movement is possible; the person may be compared to one who falls into a dead faint with dismay."[1]

An accurate definition of the difference between the prayer of quiet and the prayer of union has often been attempted by S Teresa, and after careful scrutiny of

[1] *Interior Castle,* 5th Mans., ch. i, §§ 3-4.

the texts, it seems that, in accord with P. Lamballe, we may lay down the following five characteristics of this prayer: (1) The powers of the soul are totally absorbed in it; (2) passivity is complete; (3) the Presence of God is perfectly perceived in the interior of the soul; (4) the soul is conscious of her union with God; (5) and on returning from her prayer she still retains the certainty of having been in God.

Let us review these several characteristics, adducing the confirmatory texts.

First, then, the faculties of the soul are all absorbed in contemplation. "All the faculties fail now," S Teresa says, "in such a way that their operations cannot be traced. If the soul is making a meditation on any subject, the memory of it is lost at once, just as if it had never been thought of. If it reads, what is read is not remembered nor dwelt upon; neither is it otherwise with vocal prayer. Accordingly, the restless little butterfly of the memory has its wings burnt now, and it cannot fly. The will must be fully occupied in loving, but it understands not how it loves; the understanding, if it understands, does not understand how it understands—at least, it can comprehend nothing of that it understands."[1]

Secondly, there is complete passivity. The faculties no longer exercise their functions but are joined to God, by whom they are enraptured and absorbed. "When," S Teresa says, "all the faculties of the soul are in union . . . they can then do nothing whatever, because the understanding is, as it were, surprised. The will loves more than the understanding knows; but the understanding does not know that the will loves, nor what it is doing, so as to be able in any way

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii, § 19.

to speak of it. As to the memory, the soul, I think, has none then, nor any power of thinking, nor are the senses awake, but rather as lost, so that the soul may be the more occupied with the object of its fruition."[1]

The third characteristic of the prayer of union is, as we said above, perception of the Presence of God in the recesses of the soul. "The prayer of quiet differs from that of union," says S Teresa, ". . . in the latter the soul does not even swallow the nourishment which, without its knowledge, God himself places within it. During the former prayer he appears to wish the soul to work a little, although with so much ease as hardly to be conscious of any labour."[2]

As for the fourth distinction, it consists in this: that the soul now feels that she is joined to God. "What I undertake to explain is that which the soul feels when it is in the divine union. It is plain enough what union is—two distinct things becoming one."[3]

Lastly, the fifth distinctive feature is the soul's conviction that, in this lofty prayer, she has unquestionably been in God, and God in her. "Let us now speak of the sign which proves the prayer of union to have been genuine," the Saint persists. "God, then, deprives the soul of all its senses that he may the better imprint in it true wisdom: it neither sees, hears, nor understands anything while this state lasts, which is never more than a very brief time; it appears to the soul to be much shorter than it really is. God visits the soul in a manner which prevents its doubting, on returning to itself, that it dwelt in him and that he was within it, and so firmly is it convinced of this truth

[1] Second *Relation* to Fr Rodrigo Alvarez, Rel. VIII, § 7.
[2] *Way of Perfection,* ch. xxxi, § 8.
[3] *Life,* ch. xviii, § 5.

that, although years may pass before this favour recurs, the soul can never forget it nor doubt the fact."[1]

Such is the prayer of union, and it would appear that nothing could be added to it. Yet it has its consummation in the spiritual marriage or TRANSFORMING UNION, where union is no longer momentary but becomes continuous. So it is well to specify the way in which it thus becomes perpetual.

We will begin by tracing its distinctive character. "You may think, sisters," S Teresa writes, "that so much has been said of this spiritual journey that nothing remains to be added. That would be a great mistake: God's immensity has no limits, neither have his works; therefore, who can recount his mercies and his greatness?"[2] Then, speaking of the spiritual marriage or transforming union: "When his Majesty deigns to bestow on the soul the grace of these divine nuptials, he brings it into his presence chamber and does not treat it as before, when he put it into a trance. I believe he then united it to himself, as also during the prayer of union; but then only the superior part was affected and the soul did not feel called to enter its own centre as it does in this mansion. Here it matters little whether it is in the one way or the other.

"In the former favours our Lord unites the spirit to himself and makes it both blind and dumb like S Paul after his conversion, thus preventing its knowing whence or how it enjoys this grace, for the supreme delight of the spirit is to realize its nearness to God. During the actual moment of divine union

[1] *Interior Castle,* 5th Mans., ch. i, § 8.
[2] *Interior Castle,* 7th Mans., ch. i, § 1.

the soul feels nothing, all its powers being entirely lost. But now he acts differently; our pitiful God removes the scales from its eyes, letting it see and understand somewhat of the grace received in a strange and wonderful manner."[1]

Even the Saint herself is at a loss in trying to describe this Heavenly union. "So mysterious," she writes, "is the secret and so sublime the favour that God thus bestows instantaneously on the soul, that it feels a supreme delight, only to be described by saying that our Lord vouchsafes for the moment to reveal to it his own heavenly glory in a far more subtle way than by any vision or spiritual delight. As far as can be understood, the soul—I mean the spirit of the soul—is made one with God who is himself a Spirit, and who has been pleased to show certain persons how far his love for us extends in order that we may praise his greatness. He has thus deigned to unite himself to his creature: he has bound himself to her as firmly as two human beings are joined in wedlock and will never separate himself from her."[2]

S John of the Cross is even more explicit. "The two natures are so united," he declares in the *Spiritual Canticle*, "what is divine is so communicated to what is human, that, without undergoing any essential change, each seems to be God—yet not perfectly so in this life, though still in a manner which can neither be described nor conceived."[3]

"What God communicates to the soul in this intimate union," he adds, "is utterly ineffable, beyond the reach of all possible words—just as it is impossible

[1] *Interior Castle*, 7th Mans., ch. i, § 7.
[2] *Interior Castle*, 7th Mans. ch. ii, § 3.
[3] *Spiritual Canticle*, stan. xxii, l. 2, § 5.

to speak of God himself so as to convey any idea of what he is—because it is God himself who communicates himself to the soul now in the marvellous bliss of its transformation. In this state God and the soul are united, as the window is with the light, or coal with the fire, or the light of the stars with that of the sun."[1]

This union is of such profundity, transforming man to such a point that it would almost seem to reinstate him in a state of innocence, changing his passions and his body at the same time as his soul. After this metamorphosis, "the body," says S John of the Cross, "is now ordered according to God in all its interior and exterior senses, all the acts of which are directed to God: the four passions of the soul are also under control in him; for the soul's joy, hope, fear, and grief are conversant with God only; all its appetites, and all its anxieties also, are directed unto him only. The whole substance of the soul is now so occupied with God, so intent upon him, that its very first movements, even inadvertently, have God for their object and their end. The understanding, memory, and will tend directly to God; the affections, senses, desires and longings, hope and joy, the whole substance of the soul, rise instantly towards God, though the soul is making no conscious efforts in that direction. Such a soul is very often doing the work of God, intent upon him and the things of God, without thinking or reflecting on what it is doing for him. The constant and habitual practice of this has deprived it of all conscious reflection, and even of that fervour which it usually had when it began to act."[2]

[1] *Spiritual Canticle,* stan. xxvi, l. 1, § 3.
[2] *Ibid.,* stan. xxviii, l. 2, §§ 3, 4.

So, then, the soul goes naturally and effortlessly to God and lives with him in union without, however, a permanent suspension of interior and exterior senses. This union does not hinder man from carrying out the duties of his state but rather makes them easier. It is an intimacy of each passing hour, wherein the soul is always conscious of his Presence and aware that it is he who acts within her more than she does herself. "This becomes more manifest by its effects as time goes on," S Teresa says, "for the soul learns that it is God who gives it life, by certain secret intuitions too strong to be misunderstood, and keenly felt, although impossible to describe."[1]

The union, nevertheless, is not invariably manifested with the same intensity, and there are times, indeed, when it would seem to disappear. "You must not suppose, sisters," says the Saint again, "that the effects always exist in the same degree in these souls, for, as far as I remember, I told you that in most cases our Lord occasionally leaves such persons to the weakness of their nature. . . . True, this lasts but a short time—a day or a little longer—but during this disturbance, which generally arises from some passing event, these persons learn what benefits they derive from the holy company they are in. Our Lord gives them such great fortitude that they never desert his service nor the good resolutions they have made, which only seem to gather strength by trial, nor do their hearts ever turn from them, even by a slight movement of the will. This trouble rarely happens; our Lord wishes the soul to keep in mind its natural condition so that it may be humble and may better understand how

[1] *Interior Castle,* 7th Mans., ch. ii, § 7.

much it owes him, and how great a grace it has received, and so may praise him."[1]

Further, this union is not inamissible. S John of the Cross holds that by means of it the soul is confirmed in grace, but not to the point of being incapable of ever again committing mortal sin. His view, moreover, is upheld by S Teresa, whose teaching on this point is in accordance with the spirit of the Council of Trent.

But, granted that this union is not inamissible and does not carry with it positive immunity from mortal sin, it nevertheless produces in the soul most admirable results, which are described by S Teresa.

The first, she says, is "a self-forgetfulness so complete that she really appears not to exist, for such a transformation has been worked in her that she no longer recognises herself; nor does she remember that heaven, or life, or glory are to be hers, but seems entirely occupied in seeking God's interests. . . . The second fruit is a strong desire for suffering, though it does not disturb her peace as before because the fervent wish of such souls for the fulfilment of God's will in them makes them acquiesce in all he does. If he would have her suffer, she is content; if not, she does not torment herself to death about it as she used to do. She feels a great interior joy when persecuted, and is far more peaceful than in the former state under such circumstances: she bears no grudge against her enemies, nor wishes them any ill. Indeed, she has a special love for them, is deeply grieved at seeing them in trouble, and does all she can to relieve them, earnestly interceding with God on their behalf. She would be glad to forfeit the favours his Majesty shows

[1] *Interior Castle*, 7th Mans., ch. iii.

her, if they might be given to her enemies instead, to prevent their offending our Lord."[1]

The third result is that these souls *no longer wish to die in order to enjoy the Presence of God immediately in Heaven,* but ask that they may tarry on the earth to suffer and to labour for his glory. "The sorrow and distress which such souls felt because they could not die and enjoy our Lord's presence," says S Teresa, "are now exchanged for as fervent a desire of serving him, of causing him to be praised, and of helping others to the utmost of their power. Not only have they ceased to long for death, but they wish for a long life and most heavy crosses, if such would bring ever so little honour to our Lord."[2]

Lastly, the fourth result lies in the fact that a soul in this state "*feels neither aridity nor any interior troubles,* but a constant, tender recollection of our Lord whom she wishes to praise unceasingly."[3]

The transforming union is thus the most exalted state of the spiritual life. Herein we see all human actions not only as the soul's endeavours metamorphosed by the Holy Spirit, nor yet as the Holy Spirit's exclusive operation, but as the common work of God and man, the latter doing his part beneath the influence of the Holy Spirit's gifts, while God is freely manifesting his Almighty power unhindered by the slightest oposition on the part of man. This is of all states the most enviable that the soul can hope for upon earth, since it procures the sweetest joys which can be tasted here in anticipation of eternal bliss.

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[1] *Interior Castle,* 7th Mans., ch. iii, § 4.
[2] *Ibid.,* § 5. [3] *Ibid.,* § 7.

These, rapidly outlined, are the different stages of contemplative prayer, degrees which every soul whom God so honours as to make her intimate with himself, is called on to ascend, but which in actual fact are seldom reached. For Christians, as a rule, are wanting in the generosity required to make them worthy of this signal favour, or fail to make sufficient progress in the pathways of the spiritual life after the Master has permitted them to feel the first caresses of his love.

Yet contemplation, as we have already seen, is no extraordinary prayer which oversteps the limits of the supernatural life, but is its culminating point, and souls might win to it if, after having walked in the illuminative way, they would remain in a perpetual state of recollection and renouncement.

The masters of the spiritual life, indeed, aver that these are the two most favourable dispositions for receiving mystic graces; so, in concluding this consideration of contemplative prayer, we may for a moment pause to investigate renouncement, which is the more important of the two. There is no question here of any immolation, but rather of a genuine spirit of sacrifice. A Christian soul desiring to attain the goal of the spiritual life must perfectly fulfil the Gospel plan: renounce herself, take up her cross and follow Christ to Calvary. So victim souls, concerned with the response to their vocation, will sacrifice themselves in every way and purify their faculties, the better to unite themselves with God.

First let them mortify the *understanding* — that variable faculty which may be such a powerful ally or may effectually impede the work of sanctification. The surest way to this result is to avoid all dwelling upon earthly matters and all immoderate concentra-

tion upon secular subjects which distract the soul from what should be the only objects of her contemplation: God and eternal truths. Souls should beware, too, of their private judgement, attaching little weight to personal opinions and readily acknowledging their errors when they are pointed out; knowing, too, how to mingle charity with love of the truth whenever they are wrongly contradicted.

The mortification of the *memory* is of no less moment, and will be gained by banishing all reminiscences of bygone happenings which might give rise to sentiments of hatred or revenge, desire for levity or human praise, whence, says S John of the Cross, proceed at the least imperfections and only too often actual sins as well.

As for *imagination* it must be held in check and all excessive fear and joy must be dismissed. Sometimes, imagination's play may form a gloomy prospect for the future, either because the individual temperament inclines towards despondency or else because there may be real causes for anxiety. Sometimes the opposite is the case and all looks rosy, whether by reason of exaggerated optimism or else because of genuine motives for rejoicing. Either of these two attitudes may be most prejudicial to the soul, for each is liable to dispel the calm serenity wherein the man who would remain attached to God must dwell.

Of vital consequence is mortification of the *heart*, for it is most important to detach it from the world's good things as well as from the joys of natural affections, so that it is at liberty to join itself to God. It is indeed essential for the soul aspiring to perfection to renounce the world's attractions, for, though she may not be required to bind herself by vow to poverty, at

least she must possess its spirit, so as to profit by the good things of the earth only so far as God permits. The soul, too, must detach herself as perfectly as possible from all the joys derived from human friendships and affections. Unquestionably it is lawful to be fond of parents, friends, superiors, inferiors, and directors, but such affections, however pure and profitable they may be, can easily become an obstacle to true perfection. Nature is prone to seek in them unconsciously an all too human satisfaction. However sweet it is to be surrounded by affection, to feel that we are understood, supported, and encouraged, to gather friends who share our tastes and our desires, our hopes and joys and sorrows, to know that souls respond to our devotion, it none the less is true that by indulging in such natural joys we fall far short of full renunciation, and that, in order to progress in virtue, we must be ready to forego agreeable conversation and to accept distressing separations with a generous heart.

The spoliation of the *will* lies chiefly in interior mortification, inciting us to do the will of God in all things. S Francis de Sales has left us valuable advice upon the subject, calling on souls to practise holy indifference in everything, in other words, to live continuously in abandonment. We have already said so much about this lofty attitude of soul that it is needless to repeat it here. Let it suffice us to assure the victim soul that such abandonment, her proper attitude, will make her competent not only to fulfil her victim life, but also to advance uninterruptedly in ways of sanctity.

And, finally, renunciation must be joined with recollectedness, for contemplation, as a general rule, is

only found where there is peace. Therefore the victim, after total self-renunciation, must unite herself to God as intimately as is possible. Let her solicit him in prayer and seek him midst her ordinary occupations—in other words, dwell constantly with God throughout a life of deep renunciation and of sacrifice. When she has striven so to immolate herself and to preserve her peace through all adversities, God will respond to her advances by leading her in pathways of his love.

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It is, however, true that these two dispositions, renouncement and recollection, are not sufficient in every case to bring about the appearance of contemplative prayer.

Indeed, it usually appears only when purification of the soul is perfected and, as this purification needs abundant effort on the part of man, it scarcely need be wondered at that God himself should intervene to bring about its total realisation. And sometimes he effects this through the testing of the soul by countless trials, which she must bear courageously in every portion of her nature: in body, mind, affections and in will.

These manifold ordeals, which constitute the portion of habitual suffering borne by victim souls, will be considered in the following chapter on "The Crosses of the Victim Soul."

CHAPTER IV

THE CROSSES OF THE VICTIM SOUL

THE victim state demands a union of the soul with the Redeeming Christ in his capacity as Victim, and as this union cannot be accomplished save in suffering, it may be granted that the victim life is one of sacrifice.

All victims have been immolated souls, longing to follow Jesus in the Way of Calvary, and therefore, after the example of the Master, constrained to stretch themselves upon the Tree of the Cross.

We have examined, in an earlier chapter, the sufferings which the victim soul may lay upon herself by practising mortification or the use of corporal penance. It now remains to speak of sufferings sent by God, and known to mystic writers by the general term of passive purifications.

S John of the Cross divides these purifications into separate classes. Examining first those sufferings which affect the lower portion of our being, whose function is to wean us from created things, he gives us an account of them in what he calls "the dark night of the senses." Then, passing on to those whose end is to detach the soul from self and lead her on to perfect union with the Creator, he writes of them in what he designates "the dark night of the soul."

It would be simple to attend the illustrious master through his wonderful descriptions, but as we are not

treating of the mystic way alone, and as, amongst the trials affecting victim souls, are some which, properly speaking, are not passive purifications, we will instead glance briefly at the diverse crosses to which man is liable in all the different departments of his being: in body, understanding, heart and soul, describing them as physical, intellectual, moral and supernatural crosses.

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The first of these, the class of PHYSICAL CROSSES, are those which touch the body, and such are sickness and infirmities which may at any moment strike into our life.

How many victim souls have had to carry crosses such as these! many enjoying but indifferent health while burdened with innumerable occupations or with hard and difficult tasks; others enduring wearisome afflictions, such as blindness, deafness or paralysis; others, again, tormented by mysterious ills concerned not only with the natural order, but with the supernatural world as well.

One stricken thus in bodily ways can only bend before the will of God. No doubt it is distressing to be tried in health and to become a burden to our friends, but painful as ordeals such as this can be, they carry with them opportunities for many merits. How many souls have been preserved and sanctified through feeble health, which kept them from embarking on a course of sin!

Sickness, in truth, has been the making of illustrious saints. To understand its fruitfulness we must regard it in a supernatural light. "Suffering is a gift of God," says Fr. Rodriguez. "He sends it to make trial of our virtue or to cure our failings;

to convince us of our weakness or to undeceive our self-esteem; detach us from the love of earthly things and sensual pleasures; cool our impetuosity and curb the power of that most dangerous enemy, the flesh; and to remind us that we are but exiles in this present world, for heaven is our own true native land; in short, to give us all the great advantages accruing from this trial when accepted thankfully and as a special grace."[1] It may with truth be said that suffering is able to exalt us to the highest summits of the spiritual life. "In one single day of sickness rightly borne," says P. Saint-Jure, "we grow more certainly in virtue, we repay the Heavenly Justice more for past offences, we gather costlier treasure, we make ourselves more pleasing in God's sight and give Him greater glory than in a week or month of health and strength."[2] And S Alphonsus writes: "I call our times of sickness the touchstone of our spirits; for then appears the soul's true worth. If she can bear her sufferings without anxiety, complaint or longing, obedient to physicians and superiors; if she is tranquil and resigned entirely to the Will of God, it is a sign that she possesses in herself a genuine fund of virtue."[3]

So, then, let victim souls accept the trial of sickness, if God bestows it. It often happens that its contact shows them their vocation, bringing them into closer and more intimate touch with Jesus Crucified. Moreover, certain Saints have gladly welcomed it, as witness S Teresa, who was a lifelong sufferer, and S Lydwine, stretched on a sick-bed and exposed to

[1] Rodriguez, *Christian Perfection*, 8th tr., ch. xvi.
[2] P. Saint-Jure, *Conn. et Am. de N.S. J.C.*, l. iii, ch. cxxiv, 3.
[3] S Alph., *Conform.*, V, No. 3.

spitefulness and blows, yet throughout the bitterest adversities attaining to the loftiest stage of contemplation.

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The INTELLECTUAL SUFFERINGS which afflict the mind, while less apparent than diseases or infirmities, are none the less distressing. They often take the form of grievous contradictions, due to the malice or the psychological blindness of our immediate circle, which glories in revealing its antipathy by slander, calumny and persecution, and sometimes even goes so far as to desire the degradation of its hated victim. Such tribulations may be found in every walk of life—the world, the most conspicuously Christian families, and even in the bosom of religion.

Why should we be astonished at these sufferings? For the disciple is not greater than his Master. If Jesus was insulted, buffeted, reviled, the soul desiring earnestly to follow him must suffer contradiction and reproach as he did. It pleases God, by special disposition of events, to fashion for his lovers obstacles which would appear astounding in the lives of ordinary Christians, but which, in fact, are earnests of his heavenly goodness.

So *scoffing*, *calumny*, and *evil-speaking* frequently combine to raise up barriers and oppress the innocent soul. The lives of those who strive to do God service must always be a mark for hostile criticism, and distinguished, as the life of Jesus was, by constant opposition. The spirit of the world will always manage to depreciate the best intentions and to give them a malign interpretation. So, he who seeks a little solitude for recollection will be charged with

churlishness; another, who is grave and serious, will pass as the possessor of an unattractive type of piety, while he who is light-hearted and enthusiastic will be taxed with dissipation or with levity. There is no end to the ill-natured acts which poison human intercourse. In meeting them the wisest course is to be silent and to practise charity amidst all tribulations.

S Jane de Chantal has afforded us a fine example in this matter. Widowed at twenty-eight, she was commanded by her husband's father to bring her children to his house and make her home with him. This old and sombre tyrant, before whom all must bend, had grown dependent on a servant who behaved as mistress of his castle, squandered her master's goods, and caused perpetual murmuring in the household. For over seven years S Jane was treated as an interloper and ground beneath the iron rule of this adventuress who spared her no affront. She even had the grief of seeing the servant's children placed on an equal footing with her own, sometimes, indeed, preferred before them. Though seized with indignation, she suppressed the cry of nature and encountered every insult with a gentle heart and courteous mien. She even rose to such a pitch of heroism as to give the servant's children all the soft attentions which she lavished on her own, hoping thereby to compass the conversion of her father-in-law and this unworthy woman.

But there remains a grief more painful still for lovers of God, and that is being attacked and persecuted, sometimes indeed condemned, by those who should be their defenders, but, instead, deride them, thinking so to render service to God's cause. This tribulation, known as *persecution by the righteous*, is

a most grievous trial, for though the judgements of the irresponsible may be a matter of indifference to the sturdy soul who scorns the world's esteem, the opposition of such individuals as are universally respected or who, in relation to the soul, are representatives of God, is cruel suffering indeed!

And here again the Saints have set us an example of the noblest heroism in adversity, for many of them have been forced to undergo like tribulations. We will content ourselves with mention of the best known instances throughout the centuries: S Basil, charged before the Pope, S Damasus, with heresy; S Cyril who, condemned as heretic by forty Bishops in assembly, was afterwards deprived of office; S Athanasius, persecuted on a charge of sorcery; S John Chrysostom, suspected of immorality; S Benedict, all but poisoned by his spiritual sons; S Francis of Assisi, forced to resign his office as superior because of the rebellion of his first disciples; S Joan of Arc, condemned as heretic, as lapsed, as sorceress, by an ecclesiastical tribunal, and burnt in public at the stake; S Ignatius Loyola, imprisoned in the dungeons of the Holy Office; S John of the Cross, the great reformer of the Carmelites, incarcerated by the Fathers of the Observance; S Teresa, suffering cruel provocations; S Francis de Sales, enduring for three years the shame of being accused of criminal connection with a woman of the fashionable world; S Alphonsus Liguori, basely charged before the Sovereign Pontiff in his latter years by two disciples of his own. Condemned, deprived of office as Superior-General, and even banished from the Congregation he had founded, he comforted himself by reading of S Joseph Calasanctius, the founder of the

Christian Schools, who also had been hounded from his Order. The Saint preserved his calm and prophesied that God, who had desired the institution of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, would also keep it and extend it, and so it came about. When S Alphonsus had been forced to drain his cup of sorrow almost to the dregs, the schism ended and the Congregation grew more prosperous than ever.

Such trials as these are hard enough to bear, and yet they may be added to by *total loss of reputation*. It seems that Jesus wills to associate his lovers in this manner with the cruel sorrows of his Passion, for he himself supported the most crushing outrages, and there has never been another so despised as he—charged with the blackest crimes concerning God, his fellow-creatures and himself. He was accused of being the seducer of the people, of causing a disturbance in Judæa, of being in alliance with the devil. Could insult to a God go further?

His servants meet with little better treatment, often besmirched by vilest calumnies and often, like their Master, accepting condemnation silently. In this S Gerard Majella is a notable example. Charged, by a shameless person, with a horrible offence, the Saint was questioned by his own Superior who called upon him to exonerate himself. Unmoved, as Jesus was before his judges, Gerard refused to speak. Forbidden Communion, and entreated by his Brethren, positive of his innocence, to clear himself, he answered: "There is a God: and it is for him to deal with it." At last, but not till fifty days had passed, the truth was brought to light. The wretched creature who had spread the calumny withdrew her charge, confessing that her story was the inspiration of the

devil. But vindication moved S Gerard just as little as did accusation. Interrogated as to why he had refrained from self-defence, his only answer was to ask a question in his turn: "Does not the Rule command us never to excuse ourselves, but to endure in silence every kind of mortification?" Thus he interpreted the following of virtue to its utmost bounds, and the heroic practice of obedience.

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Above and beyond these intellectual sufferings which afflict the mind, are ranged the MORAL SUFFERINGS, torturing indeed, since they affect the heart, most sensitive part of all our being.

Such trials generally issue from neglect by creatures, lack of response to our legitimate affections, from unfaithfulness or treachery in those we hold most dear, from loss of loved ones, leading on to *isolation of the heart* and moral distress. These God permits, to cleanse our hearts and bring us to a perfect purity of love. All such afflictions may be studied in the histories of his servants. And did not Jesus have to undergo them in the process of his Passion? He was forsaken by his own Apostles, denied with vehemence by S Peter, betrayed by Judas and abandoned by his Father as he hung upon the Cross. S Paul was victim of a like attack by the Galatians whom he had evangelized, and who had once received and hailed him as the Lord himself.

When *death* has robbed us of the objects of our love, the Saints' biographies will once again provide a pattern for our line of conduct. God's servants, for the most part deeply sensitive, have known, like us in corresponding case, the bitter sting of loss. But they

have found a mitigation of their sorrow and a source of consolation in their faith and love for God. In this connection it is worth observing the behaviour of S Bernard at his much-loved brother's death, the brother who had been his comrade in Religion. "I could restrain my tears but not my grief," the Saint acknowledged in a sermon: "the more I stifled it within myself, the more intense did it become. I must confess defeat. You know how good a cause I have for my distress, how loyal a companion I have lost, how watchful, diligent, affectionate, and kind he was. No other friend has loved me as he loved. No other have I found so indispensable. When I was weak in body it was he who carried me, when I was fearful he encouraged me; slothful or careless, he aroused me; forgetful or imprudent, he admonished me. We were united less by ties of blood than by a kinship of the mind, by harmony of feeling and conformity of character. Our souls were one; a single blow has struck them both at once, taking one half to heaven, leaving the other half on earth. Gerard was so peculiarly my own; mine as a brother in the way of Nature, mine as a son by virtue of profession, mine as a father through his pious care of me; another self by similarity of mind, my intimate friend by his affection. He has forsaken me and I am hurt and stricken, the blow has reached the deepest places of my soul. I mourn, but yet without reproach of him who chastens me. My lips are full of grief but not of murmuring, admitting that the same decree has punished one of us and crowned the other, each one according to his own deserts. The loving, righteous Lord has shown his mercy to his servant Gerard and, to me, the heavy

pressure of his justice. Lord, it was thou who gavest me Gerard, thou who hast taken him away. I weep because I am bereft of him, but, mindful that he came to me from thee, I give thee thanks for the delight that I have had in him. Thou hast reclaimed thy loan and taken back thine own possession. My tears have put an end to my discourse: Lord, put a limit and an ending to my tears!"[1]

Here is grief indeed! but with it what a depth of resignation!

No whit less tender-hearted but utterly abandoned to the Will of God, S Francis de Sales has shown us how to bear ourselves at times of separation. He writes to S Jane de Chantal, shortly after she has lost her mother: "Must we not ever and everywhere adore this Sovereign Providence whose counsels are so holy, good and kind? It is his pleasure to withdraw your much-loved mother from this miserable world, to place her, as I hope and trust, beside himself and close to his right hand. Let us confess that God is good and that his mercy is eternal. All that he wills is righteous, all his decrees are just, his purposes are holy and his commands are good." "Simple acceptance of God's chastisement is not enough," he says on another sad occasion, "but you must willingly consent that the blow should fall exactly where he pleases. Resign the choice to God, for it is his by right, and say to him: 'Lord Jesus, may thy blessed Will be carried out without reserve, ignoring "ifs" and "buts," without exception and without restriction—upon my father, mother, daughter—in all things and in every place.' I do not say that you must cease from wishing for and praying for their preservation,

[1] S Bernard, *Serm.* 16 *in Cant.*

but, my dear daughter, you must never say to God: 'Leave this to me and take this other away. . . .' You have four children and a father-in-law, a very precious brother, and a spiritual father, too; all these are very dear to you and rightly so, for God has willed it. But now supposing that he took them all away, would you not still have all you need in him? Do you not think that he is everything? Would it not be abundance to possess him only?"[1]

All this is applicable to *the loss or the removal of the spiritual director,* a loss which falls so heavily on certain souls. We may legitimately love the priests who guide us in the ways of God, but if God's Providence sees fit to take them from us we must acquiesce with resignation. We quote some salutary observations on the subject by Père Saint-Jure. "The loss of those who help us to advance in spiritual ways," he says, "is often the occasion of our falling into serious sin, through too much grieving at the separation, and failure to submit to those designs which God prepares for them. It is an obvious proof that our attachment to them was excessive, and that the instrument meant more to us than God who used it. The soul which honestly loves God and covets personal perfection, will say to him: 'Let my directors live or die, depart, remain, whichever is according to thy Will, O Lord; my guides have come to me from thee and thou withdrawest them; therefore I have no wish to keep them by me. Thy loveable, all-loving Will is dearer to me than their presence; and in that it has pleased thee to instruct me by their means I give thee thanks, but now that thou removest them, I believe that in thy Fatherly goodness if thou deem it

[1] S Francis de Sales, *Letters,* 432 and 468.

necessary, thou wilt give me other teachers, which I beg of thee to do, or, better still, thyself direct me without intermediary.'"[1] "Our sanctification," writes S Alphonsus in the same connection, "is not the work of spiritual fathers but of God. Our Lord allows them to us and desires that we should profit by their ministry in the direction of our conscience, but when he takes them back he wills us—far from being dissatisfied—to show redoubled confidence in him, and say to him, 'Lord, it was thou who gavest me this support and now thou takest it from me: thy Will be done in all things. But come now to my aid and teach me in what manner thou wouldst have me serve thee.'"

Lastly, we come to crosses which affect the soul in her relationship with God, and which we have already spoken of as *Supernatural Crosses*. These are most torturing of all and much the least familiar to the greater portion of the faithful, since God bestows them only upon certain souls.

The spiritual life, especially towards its term, is full of sufferings and difficulties, becoming ever greater as the soul approaches closer to perfection.

The Venerable Blosius gives us an admirable picture of God's dealings with the soul which he desires to lead up to the heights: "He visiteth her solemnly in the beginning of his new purpose, to comfort and enlighten her, and after he hath recreated and allured her with his sweet smile, he draweth her after him, and lovingly meeteth her almost everywhere, with his milk feeding his new friend. Afterwards he begins to administer to her the solid food of affliction, and plainly shows her how much she ought to endure for his name. Now she beginneth to be in a sea of troubles.

[1] P. Saint-Jure, *Conn. et Am. de N.S. J.C.*, l. iii, ch. viii, 9.

Men molest her without, passions trouble her within. Punishments afflict her externally, internally she becometh dejected by pusillanimity."[1]

It may be asked why God should deal in such a manner with the soul whom he desires to sanctify. The answer is not far to seek. To reach perfection souls must needs detach themselves from all that is not God and fly to him for himself alone and not for any joys they might receive. So all these trials are intended to produce detachment and to bring about this higher union of the soul with God. Such tribulations to a great extent compose the passive purifications mentioned earlier, whose object is to lead the soul to purity of love.

"By such means," the Venerable Blosius says again, "God trieth, purifieth, humbleth, teacheth, weans, draws, and adorns the soul. If he find her to be faithful in all things, of a good will and holy patience, and that, by long exercise and his grace, she doth mildly and affectionately endure all tribulations and temptations, then doth he more perfectly join her to himself, and similarly maketh her partaker of his secrets."[2]

Each of our faculties in turn is tried by these afflictions. For as perfection lies in the uniting of our powers with God, so must these powers all be purified. Thus, having seen what crosses visit mind and heart in order to detach them from all creatures, we turn now to the sufferings sent to crucify these selfsame faculties in order to detach them *from themselves* and make them one with God. We simply name them here, without attempting to consider them at length.

The inner sufferings purifying the *intelligence* come

[1] Blosius, *Mirror for Monks*, ch. vi. [2] *Ibid.*

in the guise of scruples and distractions, darkness, depression, and delusions, causing confusion in the soul to such a point that she is led to doubt the efficacy of her prayers, her state of grace, and even her salvation.

The sufferings of the *heart* are no less terrible, consisting of aridity, disgust, tedium, insensibility—all the more staggering to the soul who hitherto has sped with zeal towards perfection and now perceives that piety no longer has for her the least attraction.

The trials which assail the *will* may be described as weariness, discouragement, and incapacity. These paralyse the soul and cause indifference bordering on rebellion and despair. "In this condition," S Alphonsus Liguori says, "the soul feels powerless to raise herself towards God and seems incapable of making any act of love, contrition, or submission."[1] He says of himself in corresponding case: "I feel such dryness and such depth of spiritual desolation that I no longer can discover God either in prayer or in Communion. The Passion of our Lord, the Holy Eucharist, no longer move me. I am become insensible to all devotion. I seem to be a soul with neither love nor hope nor faith—in short, a soul abandoned by her God."[2]

Yet these preliminary trials are as nothing when compared with those temptations which assault the higher virtues and appear to aim at separating souls from the Creator. The mission of these formidable tribulations, in spite of all appearance to the contrary, is nothing other than the fortifying and establishing of souls in God.

[1] S Alph., *Relig. Sanct.*, ch. xiv.
[2] S Alph., *Interior Grief*, 2.

"There is no greater agony for lovers of Jesus Christ than these temptations," says S Alphonsus, "all other ills incline the soul to cling more close to God, but these temptations tend to make her separate herself from Jesus, and therefore they are far more bitter to the soul than any other torments."[1]

One of the most distressing is concerned with *purity*. The Saints themselves have known these grievous struggles. Some, it is true, have been exempt, as witness S Teresa, S Rose of Lima, S Thérèse of Lisieux. Others have undergone the deep humiliation only temporarily; for several days, as did S Magdalen of Pazzi, or for a few hours only, like S Margaret Mary. Several again have been delivered after brilliant victories. Such were S Benedict, S Francis of Assisi, and S Thomas Aquinas. But the greater number have endured the terrible assault throughout long years and even till their death. S Paul, S Francis of Rome, S Catherine of Siena, and S Benedict Labre were cruelly molested by the demon of impurity. For seven years S Alphonsus Rodriguez was the victim of these horrible temptations, S Mary of Egypt was a prey to them for seventeen, the Venerable César de Bus for twenty-five. S Alphonsus Liguori experienced them in terrifying manner at the age of eighty-eight for upwards of a year. As a general rule, these conflicts are the chief temptation to be undergone by souls invited to a high degree of sanctity, and yet there are others which increase and multiply proportionately with the soul's advance towards perfection. These are temptations in connection with the theological virtues, faith, and hope.

Those which refer to *faith* are truly formidable. S

[1] S Alph., *Love of Christ*, ch. xiii, 7.

Jane de Chantal suffered from them almost all her life. When, now and again, they somewhat lessened, they were replaced by darkness, impotence, and great aridity by total want of inclination and of feeling in the exercise of virtue. It was in vain that she essayed to pray, her mind—alert in everything but prayer—remained in darkness. If she applied herself to loving God it seemed as though her heart were turned to stone; the very Name of God was chilling to her soul, and hence sprang desolations not to be described. Her painful state endured for forty years or more and was redoubled in intensity throughout the last nine years, enduring till a month before her death. Her soul was then abandoned to so many and such cruel inner sufferings that she no longer recognised herself. She dared not look within nor raise her eyes to God. Her soul appeared to be defiled by sin, black with ingratitude, disfigured, horrible to contemplate. The greater services she rendered God—the more her perfection became apparent to the world—the more she saw herself deprived of every virtue and despoiled of all her merits. Doubt with regard to all the most adorable mysteries, blasphemous thoughts against the merciful attributes of God, abominable judgements of her neighbours, all these contended for possession of her mind. The tears would flow as she recounted her distress. At night a listener would hear her sighing like a sufferer at the point of death; by day she neither ate nor drank. Most terrible of all, amidst these torturing temptations, she thought herself abandoned by her Heavenly Master. It seemed to her that God no longer noticed her nor cared for her; she stretched her arms towards him, but just as, in the dark, we stretch them out towards a loved one disappeared for

ever. It was to her as though her God were worse than absent—he was her enemy and repudiated her; it was in vain that, struggling to exorcise her fear, she tried to picture him as Shepherd, Spouse, or Friend; she always saw him as an angry Judge or as a slighted Master claiming his revenge. Little by little every exercise directed towards God became a burden. The hours of prayer, especially of Communion, brought on fits of trembling, when the knowledge of her own offences and God's holiness transfixed her like a sword. Up to this time she had at least retained the light with which she had directed others, but now it was so no longer. Her ministry became a source of horrible temptations. She could no longer hear a pain described without enduring it herself, nor listen to a tale of sin without imagining herself committing it. She was reduced to such a state that nothing in the world could comfort her, unless it were the thought of death. "I have been buffeted by these temptations during one and forty years," she said one day, "and shall I then lose heart? No, I will hope in God, even were he to slay me and destroy me for eternity."

And in the face of all her sufferings, she humbly added these magnificent words: "My soul was like a rusted iron, and therefore it has needed all the fires of Heavenly Justice for its cleansing."[1]

Temptations of a similar kind attack the virtue of *hope*. These, too, are apparent in the lives of the greatest Saints, ranging from mere discouragement to sheer despair, and from despair to a conviction of eternal reprobation. S Francis de Sales himself was victimised by such temptations; for many weeks he laboured under the belief that he was destined for the

[1] *Cf.* Dom Lehodey, *Le Saint Abandon*, p. 462, *et seq.*

fires of hell. S Catherine of Genoa believed herself abandoned by her Lord, and S Teresa was persuaded that her Heavenly Spouse had left her never to return.

Such things are startling enough, but yet the surest method of escape, as in the case of temptings against faith, is not to dwell upon them. Indeed, all thoughts antagonistic to predestination are like a labyrinth from which the mind can hardly find release, and therefore masters of the spiritual life advise that thoughts like this be shunned and that the soul resign herself without reserve to God, avoiding all inquiry into his designs, which far surpass the scope of our intelligence.

In illustration we may quote the edifying story of a servitor of God, to whom the devil, masquerading as an angel of light, falsely announced his reprobation. The message was a pretext for the Saint to make a gallant act of purest love. "Alas!" he answered, "if my sins have merited my condemnation and so I am debarred from loving God eternally, I can at least in this life love him with all my soul, and so by love atone, in this world, for all that I may not offer him hereafter." The devil fled confounded, for the most efficacious means of fighting him is to employ his temptings for the better dedication of our powers to God's service.

Moreover, these temptations are intended, like all others, to purify the soul and strengthen us against the enemy of our salvation. Temptation in itself is not an evil but a trial, which allows us to acquire abundant merits. "Temptation signifies election," says a godly writer. "He is condemned who is not proved." An enemy assaults a city for the very reason that he has not mastered it; the stronger the defence the greater

effort does he make against it. And so it is with souls pursued by Satan; the devil does not trouble those who are his subjects, he saves his persecutions for the friends of God.

Let souls exposed to such tribulations rest serene, for these disturbances are certain proof of their predestination.

And, lastly, above all the trials yet described, are ranged *the troubles and distresses caused by Satan.*

And here we are not speaking of the ordinary temptations caused by sensuality or pride, but of extraordinary afflictions like the woes of Job, allowed by God on purpose to encourage heroism, and these, again, are illustrated in the great Saints' lives. Truly God's servants are the objects of the devil's hatred. He vents his rage upon them in a terrifying manner, because in them he recognises grace prevailing over nature—the human overcome by the Divine. When any soul, through love of poverty, of suffering and derision—by practising self-abnegation, sacrifice, detachment—is filled with God alone, at once the powers of hell converge upon her to procure her fall or take her in the deadliest of snares. The wrestlings of the holy Curé d'Ars with the foul spirit which disturbed his rest by frightful cries, strange noises, ghastly visions, and at last by striking him and even setting his couch alight, are common knowledge.

The devil does not always push his spite so far. He may content himself with troubling souls in order that he may deprive them of their supernatural fruitfulness. He plants obsessions in their minds which seem to plunge them into hell. Sometimes they are possessed by feelings of aversion for their Maker, their superiors, and pious people; sometimes they in-

voluntarily utter monstrous words, or suffer from a lethargy of all their powers, as if their will were free no longer; sometimes they are incapable of making any spiritual act and are convinced that they are always in a state of sinning. Blind to the good which God is working in them, they distinguish nothing in their spiritual life but vile abominations.

Others are tempted by hallucinations. They think they see the Blessed Virgin or that they hear our Lord, believe themselves to be in touch with the invisible world and in possession of the gift of prophecy, when all the time they are the dupes of gross illusions.

The soul assaulted by the devil in such ways as this must persevere in her renunciation and in the spirit of detachment and of sacrifice, for it is Satan's aim to lure her from the paths of virtue. She must persist in prayer in spite of every obstacle encountered, for prayer and mortification are the weapons recommended by our Lord in parallel case: "Watch ye and pray. This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting."

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Such, briefly indicated, are the crosses which may burden victim souls. None but the principal ones have been described, for all the many others come into the ordinary spiritual life. They may be found extensively developed in the classic spiritual manuals treating of the different trials of the soul as she ascends towards the heights.

And yet there are others still, no longer caused by Nature, world, or devil, but by God himself. These, far from being humiliating, may become most honourable and are often signs of lofty virtue. We would

especially name the pains accompanying *Stigmatisation.*

There are two orders of stigmatics: those properly so-called, who bear upon their bodies the sacred marks of the Redeemer's Passion, and those others who may be termed Com-passionists or Fellow-sharers in the Passion.[1] These last, without external manifestations of the Heavenly Victim's Wounds, yet feel with him the sufferings which he bore throughout his Martyrdom. Many stigmatics have become Com-passionists at their own request, of whom we may specify S Catherine of Siena and S Lydwine. These, through humility, besought their Master to remove the traces of his love upon their bodies, while leaving them to suffer all the sharpness of his pain interiorly. Others, however, bore the holy stigmata of the Redemption till their death, as did S Francis of Assisi, or produced them periodically, like Louise Lateau.

Such special favours hail from the extraordinary realm of mysticism and are less infrequent than might be supposed. Stigmatics may be found in every period of history, especially at times of trouble and disturbance, when God has willed to associate a host of victims with himself, in order that they may complete the saving Sacrifice with him and compensate for sinners' outrages by bitter pains heroically borne.

Appreciable as these peculiar marks of Heavenly condescension doubtless are, and though it is permissible to ask of God contemplative prayer, which elevates the soul and still more specially unites it to the Creator, humility must make us careful not to

[1] I have coined the term "com-passionist" as there would seem to be no modern English equivalent for "compatient," though I believe that "compassionary" is an old English word with much the same meaning.—TRANSLATOR.

crave such favours as attract the notice of the faithful and, where the soul is not sufficiently sanctified, expose her to the sins of vanity and pride. Moreover, God is Master of his gifts, distributing them where and how he pleases, and therefore it is better that he should be free to order their disposal as he wills. If there are souls to whom, in an official manner, so to speak, God trusts this special mission of sharing in his suffering, their only duty is to bow before his Will, accepting the great honour offered them. For them it is the surest way of making themselves one with Jesus in his Victim office, and of becoming victims offered, with him, for sinners.

CHAPTER V

THE DEVOTIONS OF THE VICTIM SOUL

NOTHING remains for our investigation save the various devotions of the victim soul. To realise her calling she must join herself to the Redeeming Christ; this done, her natural course is to direct her mind and heart towards the lodestone of his Person, honouring him in all the different revelations of his love throughout the ages.

In the Early Church the Crucifix was given a place of paramount importance in the estimation of the faithful. In ancient times regarded as a thing of shame, the Cross became, in consequence of Jesus' Crucifixion, an object of the deepest veneration. Christians, remembering the Sufferings of their Master, applied themselves to loving contemplation of the Saviour-God dying upon the Cross of agony and giving proof to men of his most pure and tender love.

Later, devotion to the Passion somewhat lessened and was replaced by that addressed to Jesus-Victim in the Most Holy Sacrament of his love. The Holy Eucharist, at first consumed entirely by the priests and people in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, afterwards reverently reserved in Tabernacles so that the sick might be provided for in case of need, finally issued from the Churches and was conveyed, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, with solemn ceremony through the city streets. The institution, in the

Middle Ages, of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Sacrament contributed considerably towards the development of the devotion.

In the seventeenth century it appears that Jesus, by his apparitions to S Margaret Mary, willed to reveal to men in a more urgent manner still the treasures of his inexhaustible love. Thereafter the devotion to the Sacred Heart increased apace and satisfied the needs of souls in love with reparation.

So, then, it is established that these three devotions —to the Passion, to the Blessed Sacrament, and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus—form the supreme delight of victim souls. Some, it is true, devote themselves especially to the first, loving to be united with the Sufferings of Jesus in his grievous Martyrdom; others prefer the Holy Eucharist, desiring to be victims there with Jesus and give their victim life the humble, silent character of the Eucharistic Host; and others, again, turn rather to the Sacred Heart in order to console that Heart for the ingratitude of men and render homage for its love.

In fact, these three devotions complement each other, and therefore our intention is to look at them in turn, noting the various practices connected with each one.

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Devotion to the Passion, the first in order of time, is one of the devotions which have most attracted the great Saints. It is common knowledge that S Francis of Assisi had a particular *attrait* for Jesus Crucified, and after his example many souls have loved to meditate upon the sufferings of the Heavenly Master in his Passion, choosing to study them beneath their

several aspects; the sufferings of body, mind, and heart.

And what, indeed, did Jesus fail to suffer in those grievous torments of his Passion?

His sacred body buffeted and struck in the High Priest's palace, and pitilessly scourged in the Prætorium, outrageously maltreated by the executioners of the guard-room, crushed by the burden of the Cross on the ascent to Calvary and pierced by nails upon the Tree.

His mind endured an equal burden of atrocious tortures. He found himself accused of darkest misdemeanours before Caiphas and spat on in the Governor's Hall, mocked in the Palace of Herod and challenged up on Calvary to desert the Cross. He who is Truth was charged with falsehood: he is the Prince of Peace, and he was looked upon as the disturber of the peace. The Everlasting King of all the ages treated as a slave! the Sovereign Pontiff of religions charged with blasphemy! Divinity Incarnate taxed with diabolical possession!

And how his Heart is tried! Jesus was Love, but yet he was despised by his own people, the Jews, who brought about his death; forsaken by his friends, who saved themselves instead of staying to defend him; and subjected to torment by his Father, who hid his Face in anger upon Calvary. So victim souls, moved with compassion by the sight of all these outrages, love to remain beneath the Cross in meditation on his pain. Nevertheless, their contemplation must not be a barren thing, but on the contrary must yield a plenteous harvest of good consequences, and must arouse not only sentiments of pity, but acts which may give respite to the Heavenly Master's

Eyes, weary with looking on the world's transgressions, and afford a certain consolation to his sorely wounded Heart.

Let victim souls, then, generously shoulder sorrows, contradictions, and all other sufferings which God may offer them. Eager to carry out their mission, let them be bold to walk with Jesus in the way to Calvary and die with him, if need be, on the Cross.

Devotion to the Passion of our Lord, so justly calculated to encourage piety and fan the spirit of sacrifice, can also be extended in support of divers pious practices described below.

First by *the hallowing of Friday,* the day particularly dedicated to the memory of the Saviour's death. Throughout this day the soul devoted to the Crucified will choose, from hour to hour, to live again the cruel torments of the Passion, following him from Caiphas to Pilate and from Pilate to the court of Herod, from Herod to the Judgement Hall and thence to Golgotha. Thus lingering upon the details of those sorrowful scenes, they join themselves in spirit with the holy women, brave enough to be associated with him in his Martyrdom.

The following of the fourteen *Stations of the Cross,* in church or chapel, will be counted as a duty for each Friday afternoon by victim souls. They will be treading in the footsteps of his Mother, who according to tradition spent the two days which followed on his Death retracing with her friends the sorrowful way from Pilate's Hall to Calvary and on from Calvary to the Sepulchre, pausing at each of those most memorable stations where her Son had suffered most acutely, and kissing all those portions of the way still spotted with the Precious Blood.

To the Way of the Cross the victim soul will add *devotion to the Saviour's Five Most Sacred Wounds*, reminding us so poignantly of the immensity of Jesus' love for souls. The Heavenly Master willed, not only to endure the awful torture of the Scourging, but also that of Crucifixion, desiring that his Hands and Feet and Side should be transfixed and opened, so that he might bestow through them upon a guilty world the last drops of his Precious Blood.

It is, moreover, natural that all victim souls should venerate the Sacred Wounds of the Redeemer. By joining thus with Mary, listening to the hammer-strokes which drove the bitter nails into the Saviour's Hands and Feet; with the Apostles, knowing their Risen Master by his Wounds; with Angels and with Saints who contemplate them now in Heaven, the soul will draw from these unfailing founts a great increase of faith and hope and charity. Was it not when he saw those Heavenly scars that Thomas found his faith again and, with it, strength to follow Jesus even to a martyr's death? And is it not through the remembrance of these Wounds that souls may gain fresh courage in the midst of trial?

Lastly, these pious practices are crowned by the *devotion to the Holy Face*. The vision of those sore-afflicted Features cannot fail to rouse pure sentiments of penitence and love.

If sinful souls could always have before their eyes the sight of Jesus suffering it surely must arrest them in their downward course and bring them back to him who shed his Blood for them, making them give themselves, like Mary Magdalen, to works of penitence.

The fervent, too, will find renewal of their zeal and love in this sweet contemplation. The treading of the

way of sacrifice is so afflicting to our nature that we are sometimes tempted to abandon it. At such distressing times as this let victim souls regard the Holy Face of Jesus. The vision of his sorrow-stricken Countenance will give them courage and inspire them to pursue their way upon the Royal Highway of the Cross.

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Devotion to the Passion was succeeded, as we have seen already, by DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

How comprehensible it is that victim souls, who have already meditated on the Saviour's griefs, should hasten lovingly towards that Sacrament which verily contains himself, his Body, Soul, and Godhead. If it is good to call to mind the memory of a much-loved friend, how infinitely preferable is it to enjoy his presence, tasting the happiness of dwelling in his company.

Further, the Holy Eucharist is the memorial of the Saviour's Passion. Everything in it calls to mind the Martyrdom of Jesus. Here he is at men's mercy as on the day when he was sent to death, dragged to the bar of popular opinion, summoned before the harsh tribunal of an arrogant, limited reason, mocked as he was when brought to Annas and to Caiphas, ridiculed as in Herod's Court, basely betrayed as Pilate then betrayed him through a servile reverence for the esteem of men.

As we have seen already, Jesus no longer suffers in the Eucharist, yet in his Sacrament of love he shows forth all the characteristics of his Immolation. How often must he meet the treacherous kiss of Judas in communions sacrilegiously received; S Peter's dis-

avowal in the thanklessness of men; his followers' abandonment in the ignoring of his presence; the Scourging and the Crown of Thorns, the blows and spitting, in the awful profanations emanating from his bitter enemies.

This wondrous Sacrament being thus the great memorial of his Passion, what more inevitable than that victim souls should make of it the centre of their worship? We, therefore, give below a list of pious uses rising out of the devotion.

First comes *assisting at Holy Mass,* for victim souls not merely a liturgical form, but a dramatic act, in which they have their part, not only as spectators, but as actors. As Mary, Mary Magdalen, S John, and the holy women joined themselves to his sufferings upon the Cross, so spiritual victims can unite themselves with the Great Victim's Immolation offered upon the Altar. Placing their personal sufferings, in a mystical manner, on the paten or in the priestly chalice, they offer them to God the Father with the sufferings of Jesus, so truly that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass becomes indeed their personal sacrifice as well.

Then there is *Holy Communion,* which they look upon not simply as a means of sanctification, but as an invitation to incorporate themselves with Christ, the Heavenly Victim. Thus their Communion is not only sanctifying, but becomes as well an act of immolation. Through it they offer adoration, thanks, and reparation, and pray as Christ once did on Calvary, perpetuating, in a sense, his Victimal function and beseeching God the Father to bestow upon the earth forgiveness of the sinner and the grace he needs for his salvation.

Finally, we come to *adoration of the Blessed Sacrament;* public, as at the times of solemn Expositions, or private, in our personal visits to the Most Holy Sacrament.

Indeed, all victim souls delight to come and bow themselves before the Immaculate Host, first to console the Heavenly Master in the sorrowful loneliness to which the multitude's indifference and neglect condemn him, and then to join their prayer to his before the Father. Jesus perpetuates his holy Victimal functions in the Tabernacle, and victim souls unite themselves to him in his atoning adoration.

Moreover, in this heavenly contact they discover lights which they might never know without it. Jesus, in making himself one with them, reveals to them the fondness of his Heart. It is a constant state of intimate association and it prolongs itself even amidst the avocations of this world, for souls who make a habit of approaching Jesus in the Tabernacle, from converse with their Master keep a consciousness of his perpetual Presence, in spite of all the occupations which engage their mind. Happy those victims who on earth already live the life of Heaven!

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Thirdly, we meet with THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART.

Already in existence in the seventeenth century, the practice was considerably extended by the apparitions of the Saviour to S Margaret Mary. Unhappily it is not always perfectly understood.

To be of use to souls it must, indeed, consist of more than outward practices. Too many of the faithful are, alas! content with certain exercises appertaining to it, and have no desire to learn its spirit.

So victim souls who fain would make the Sacred Heart the object of their favourite devotion had better first investigate its depths. Their mind must learn to recognise its grandeur and its gentleness, its excellence, its goodness, dignity, and sanctity. Their hearts must love its infinite perfections, their will must show itself desirous of responding to its lightest wishes, of toiling for its glory, and of being immolated for love of it. Urged by a pressing need of imitation, they must first and foremost strive to practise all those moral virtues of which it gives us the example, principally meekness and humility, since he himself commanded it while living on this earth: "Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart."

In this way souls will learn to what extent the Sacred Heart of Jesus burns with love for us, the treasures of grace it has in store, and the illimitable mercy it contains. Then and then only may they make an outward declaration of devotion by means of pious practices enjoined upon us by our Lord himself.

First, *the observance of the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart*. Souls will prepare themselves for this solemnity by means of a novena both of prayer and sacrifice, beginning on the Feast of Corpus Christi and lasting till the Feast Day of the Sacred Heart. They will be careful to insure that its performance shall consist less of additional exercises than of the ordinary acts of every day performed with deeper fervour, of duties carried out more perfectly, and of the seizing of all possible opportunities for giving God the homage of their sufferings and their sacrifices. Upon the Feast Day, after praying fervently, devoutly hearing Mass and making their Communion in a

genuine spirit of reparation, they will remain in deepest recollectedness, ending their prayers with the reciting of an act of reparation offered to our Lord in compensation for the insults he receives throughout the Octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Then they will *honour the first Friday in each month*. We know that Jesus has expressed the wish that this particular day should be especially devoted to his Sacred Heart, promising in return to grant the grace of final perseverance to the faithful who will answer his appeal for nine successive months. Of course, this act must not be undertaken from a motive of self-interest alone, the soul assuming that when once the nine Communions asked for have been made she may dispense herself from further effort in the performance of the duties of her state, and thereby place herself within the reach of every kind of danger. Our Lord expressly asked for these Communions as a proof of love and thankfulness and reparation, and as a means of deepening and sustaining in the soul an ever-growing sense of true and strong devotion to his Sacred Heart. Hence his desire must be acceded to from motives not of selfish interest, but of fervent love. S Margaret Mary's writings give a clear enough expression of the Heavenly Master's Mind. "He promised me," she says, "that souls devoted to his Sacred Heart should never perish." And elsewhere: "He discovered to me his will that men should know and love him and adore him. Because of this desire he would bestow upon them plenteous graces as soon as they had given themselves in utter consecration to the love and adoration of his Sacred Heart, and all souls so consecrated and devoted to his Heart should never perish." We are concerned, then, with a deep

devotion, real, complete self-dedication and a grateful memory of benefits received, rather than with a practical method of escaping everlasting death. Our Lord has promised succour at the last to none but his devoted servants.

Thirdly, the victim soul will give herself to the *observance of the Holy Hour*. This is to be distinguished from the Vigil, the Holy Hour being kept between eleven o'clock and midnight of the night of Thursday, while the hour's Vigil may be kept on all days of the week and at any moment of the day or night.

This pious practice was demanded also by our Lord in his appearance to S Margaret Mary. "Each Thursday night," he said, "I will permit you to participate in the exceeding heaviness of Heart which I elected to experience in Gethsemani. And that you may be with me in the humble prayer which I then offered to my Father, you will arise and from eleven o'clock till midnight will prostrate yourself face downwards on the ground, partly to pacify God's wrath by craving grace for sinners, and partly to alleviate the bitter sorrow caused me by the abandonment of my Apostles, evoking that reproach addressed to them: 'What! Could ye not watch one hour with me?'"

The practice is a happy one for victim souls. Kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament whenever they are at liberty to do so, they rejoice in offering Jesus their compassion. When men forsook him in Gethsemani, only an angel stood by him to comfort him; now he may find human creatures' help and consolation. Where there are no considerations of obedience or of prudence to be studied, souls must not hesitate to

interrupt their rest to keep their Master company, and must console him by the fervour of their prayer for the indifference or treachery of countless semi-Christian souls by whom he is abandoned and reviled.

Lastly the victim soul will venerate the *picture of the Sacred Heart.*

The Church has always sanctioned and shown favour to the cult of images, and has avenged by her anathemas attacks upon them by iconoclasts—because man's nature, being at once material and spiritual, needs must have outward representations if it is to gain a grasp of things Divine.

Jesus has willed, moreover, to reveal his love's immensity to men beneath the sensible image of his Human Heart. The Church adopts the symbol, making it the material object of devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Our Lord, indeed, has asked for veneration of his Person under this particular aspect, pledging himself to bless those places where the picture of his Heart is reverenced. We quote once more the visionary of Paray: "One day," she says, "this Holy Heart was shown me in the semblance of a throne of fire emitting flames on every side, more dazzling than the sun and clear as crystal. The Wound that he received upon the Cross was plainly visible. This Heavenly Heart was circled by a crown of thorns surmounted by a cross." "Our Lord," she says again, "assured me that he took particular delight in honour given him beneath the figure of his Heart of Flesh, and willed that pictures of it should be shown in public to affect the hardened hearts of men, promising me that he would shed abundantly upon the souls so honouring him the wealth of grace with which his Heart abounds.

Wherever it is shown this image will attract all kinds of blessing to its place of exposition."

Responding to the Heavenly Master's wish, the victim soul will venerate the picture of the Sacred Heart, and entering his wounded Side in spirit, will find her refuge in that holy Tabernacle, there to dwell in love.

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Such are the chief devotions of the victim soul. But we should be found seriously wanting in our duty if, as we brought this volume to a close, we failed to lift our readers' eyes to her who is Queen of Heaven, inviting souls to venerate her in her character of victim.

Mary, as has been pointed out before, was also victim. The Church, indeed, in the litanies assigned to her, delights in praising her as Queen of Martyrs, for though she did not shed her blood as such, she won the glorious title by the sufferings of her heart and so became our pattern in the victim life.

For that immaculate heart not only bore the actual shame and anguish of her Son, of which she was the sorrowful spectator, but also suffered them before they came.

Mary foreknew the price that he must pay for our salvation, and so the sword foretold by Simeon never ceased its piercing and repiercing of her heart, even amid the purest joys of her Divine Maternity. So truly that she could not look upon the Feet or Hands, the Brow or Features of her Child without a vision of the future with its bitter nails, its cruel thorns, the spitting and the blows.

But she accepted all the sufferings of her heart and offered them to God in union with the sufferings of Jesus. Thus Mary, too, was victim with her Victim

Son, adding her own compassion to the Saviour's Passion.

In consequence she is our pattern in the victim life, and may we learn from her to cherish pain before it comes, accepting it as soon as it appears and blessing it when it has wounded us. We must, in filial love, endeavour to be like her in her life of suffering, and to that end we need not fear to supplicate her in the midst of pain, loving to use that invocation which will please her by reminding her of what she suffered and of the Agony of her Son : *Domina nostra a Cruce, ora pro nobis!*—"Our Lady of the Cross, entreat for us!"

CONCLUSION

PÈRE PRÉVOT, in concluding the abridged biography of Mother Marie-Véronique du Cœur de Jésus, foundress and first Superior-General of the Institute of Victim Sisters of the Sacred Heart, speaks of the subject of the volume in the following terms: "More than all other saintly souls of modern times she seems to sum up in her life and works the characteristics of the victim life under its twofold aspect, mystical and practical. Her influence, exerted more or less directly, through her personality or writings or through Père Giraud's works, of which she was the inspiration, affected many different works of penitence, of reparation, and of immolation founded in our times. Her Order is the only one, of several of its kind, on which the Holy See officially bestowed—and that spontaneously—the name of Victims of the Sacred Heart, and it may be asserted with conviction that the victim spirit of the Most Sacred Heart, which ever breathes more steadily through the Church, has owed its wide diffusion more to the Order's foundress than to any other individual."

Further, he writes: "*It is our earnest prayer that someone abler and with a greater measure of authority than ourselves may undertake a finished synthesis (combining the dogmatic, the historical, and practical points of view) of that which Providence has wrought, particularly through the agency of Mother Véronique,*

in preparation for and in the inauguration of the great Crusade of victims of the Sacred Heart. For such a work, composed beneath the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, supported by the prayers and tears of many hidden victims known and loved of God and consequently richly blessed by him, might bring about a vigorous movement among souls and cause them to present to God the full amount of reparation and conversion which his justice and his holiness demand for our forgiveness and salvation."[1]

It was while reading the above that the idea of writing *Victim Souls* was first presented to the author. And so we have endeavoured to preserve the continuity of that which has been written on the victim life by Père Giraud and Père Prévot and, in so far as personal capacities and limitations have permitted, have tried to carry out the wishes of the second writer. The work has been accomplished under many difficulties and in spite of countless hindrances, but it is based on personal experience and draws its inspiration from the edifying lives of certain victim souls who, in the Providence of God, have crossed the author's path.

Nevertheless, we are not so misguided as to think that we have definitely solved the problem. Our work exhibits many a hiatus, and leaves us with a sense of having scrutinised the subject from the outside rather than from within, and having scanned the *setting* of the victim life more closely than the life itself. In other words, we feel that we have demonstrated the

[1] *La Vie de victime pour l'heure présente ou Vie abrégée de la R. Mère Marie-Véronique du Cœur de Jésus*—Casterman, Tournai, 216, 217. There is a fuller *Life,* but P. Prévot's conclusion which we quote above appears in the abridged edition only.

approaches to this lofty state and how it should be entered into, rather than how it should be lived when once attained. And so, in echo of Père Prévot's prayer, we would express the fervent hope that, coming after us, some author who is better versed in theological learning and also more advanced in spiritual ways, may carry on the work and finish it, defining and expounding in a truly masterly fashion the whole wide scope and compass of the question. . . .

But be this as it may, we trust that we have wrought a useful work. This modest book of ours may have the privilege, we hope, of bringing light to souls to whom the victim life is still unknown, revealing its sublimity, and possibly inviting them to enter on the way which climbs the highest summits of the spiritual life. If, having reached these heights, souls find our work inadequate, they have but to turn to all those victim lives referred to in an earlier chapter of this work[1] in order to discover edifying patterns who can satisfy their lawful piety—that is to say, unless the Holy Spirit undertakes himself to govern and enlighten them in their ascent.

The subject has been treated as Père Prévot wished, from the historical, dogmatic, and practical points of view.

First, in the section given up to the historical aspect of the question, we considered the Old Testament victims, the New Testament Victim and the victims in the Church. Taking our inspiration from the material furnished by the Bible, we tried to show how victims under the Old Testament law proclaimed the Sacrifice of Calvary and prepared its way. Then,

[1] Chapter III, Part I.

turning to the Heavenly Victim, we delighted in the contemplation of the beauty of his act and in considering the happy issues of his Immolation. Lastly, extolling the great law of solidarity which joins in one all Christians in Christ's Mystical Body, we proved successfully that down the centuries a throng of spiritual victims, mounting in their turn and in a mystical manner to the Cross of Calvary, have offered themselves wholly for the supernatural holocaust. These are the immolated victims who have shown to us the meaning of the victim life such as we understand it from the spiritual point of view.

The second portion of the book contained the moral and dogmatic study of the question, first proving, by a theological thesis founded on arguments drawn from Scripture, from Tradition, and from reason, that this victim life is nothing but the Christian life lived with immense attention to perfection. Continuing, we dwelt upon the state and function of the victim, and demonstrated that the state is one of adoration, thanksgiving, atonement, and supplication, having as function the procuring of God's glory and the saving of men's souls. Moreover, moved by the desire to lead souls to the highest levels of the victim life, first having pointed out the dangers which beset the way, we afterwards established that the soul attains the heights by reproducing in herself the mind of Jesus-Victim, and sketched the different steps by which she must ascend. Enlarging further on the moral and dogmatic implications of the question, we showed the qualities which should be found in the director of the victim soul, and spoke of the vocation of the victim and the victim vow, explaining by what signs the victim's calling can be recognised and under what

conditions souls may take upon themselves this solemn vow.

The third part was devoted firstly to the demonstration of the truth that for the victim soul the only fitting attitude must be abandonment. And then, adopting the ascetic point of view, we thought about the weapons of the victim soul: prayer, suffering, and zeal, and subsequently made a study of the mystical aspect, dealing with the prayer of contemplation and with passive purifications or the trials of the victim life. Lastly, considering the subject from its practical side, we gave an indication of the various devotions of the victim soul.

And now the way is clear. Souls are most often hindered by the difficulties which encounter them, and certain persons have found wanton pleasure in the exaggeration of these obstacles. So we have striven to reduce these dreaded bugbears to their true proportions, endeavouring to prove that, in despite of every hindrance, the victim life is perfectly accessible to willing souls. May such as these receive the Heavenly call and subsequently tread the ways of sacrifice.

Moreover, those who leave their families in youth and give themselves to the Almighty in Religion are already victims. Indeed, Religious Life, in essence, is a victim life, especially for monks and nuns who lead the life of contemplation.

Unfortunately, many Christians fail to understand the part such glorious vocations play. "Why should these useless people leave the world and shirk the duties which they owe society?" exclaims the unbeliever who has missed the meaning of the supernatural. And yet these so-called egoists, without apparent function in society, are probably the greatest

benefactors of humanity in its progress towards its destiny. For we are made for heaven, but to attain it we have need of grace, and grace is often won for us by lives of mortification in Contemplative Orders.

The Christian apostolate is certainly not limited to active intercourse with souls in the endeavour to convert them to a Christian life. It calls for supernatural tactics, thoroughly understood and mastered, before the exercise of zeal can be attempted. The work of an apostle means collaboration in the purpose of redemption; in other words, it is to rescue souls from Satan and bring them back to God. But this vocation of the citizens of Heaven supposes first of all a supernatural life—or grace—and this is merited for us by monks and nuns through prayer and sacrifice.

By way of illustration we may say that the Contemplatives supply the arms and ammunition needed for the conquering of souls. During the War, if victory had depended on the actual combatants alone, our armies must have suffered sure defeat. The troops in contact with the enemy require munitions and supplies brought regularly to their hand, or else disaster must ensue. The parable applies to the tremendous struggle between good and evil. Apostles are not only those who battle in the fighting-line, but also those who pray and immolate themselves, upon the mountain-top, for the success of their companions' arms. With neither preparations nor supplies offensives must miscarry in the sphere of military operations, and disappointment equally awaits those apostolic workers who depend on zeal unbacked by supernatural forces. To be effective the apostolate must rest on prayer and sacrifice. Let us beware, then, of ignoring the important role of the Contemplatives,

remembering that they are the foremost agents of success in the campaign for souls.[1]

And they are also victims, or at least they ought to be, who are the chosen of the Lord and have received the priesthood. Their normal business is the reproducing in their lives, with Jesus, Priest and Victim, of all his sentiments throughout his Passion. Accord- to the beautiful expression used by S Paulinus: *Victima sacerdotii sui et sacerdos suae victimae*—"The priest is victim of his priesthood and his victim's priest."

P. Plus, reflecting the ideas of many other writers, aptly remarks in his *Ideal of Reparation:* "The priest, entrusted with the prolongation of the Christ, must copy Jesus and must give himself as offering with him. As consecrator he will then be victim with his Master. A great part of his ministry will always be to him a closed book if, while accepting for himself an active role as the distributor of Jesus' Body, of his word, and his forgiveness, he does not at the same time undertake his Master's Victim role, the Master in whose place he stands and whose high functions he discharges."

Later he says again, in speaking of the Eucharistic Sacrifice: "The priest who wishes fully to understand his Mass and live it in entirety does all in union with his Victim and nought unless so joined to him. *Per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso.* All through Jesus-Victim, all with Jesus-Victim, all in Jesus-Victim. To live except as living crucified should have for him no meaning. His wretchedness and feebleness will doubtless be the cause of many a fall, but his ideal will still

[1] See *The Contemplative Life,* by a Carthusian Monk. (Burns Oates and Washbourne, London.)

be there; to be the Holy Sacrifice's man, a man of sacrifice."

Those generous persons to be met with in the world, devoted to good works and toiling in collaboration with the priesthood for the good of souls, are also capable of being victims. Unhappily they do not always comprehend the beauty of their role nor the extent and greatness of their mission, mistaking both the end they aim at and the means to be adopted if they would obtain a true supernatural harvest. Sometimes they take to charitable works, urged rather by a need of natural activity than by a supernatural conviction, and so those good results which they desire miscarry for the lack of proper methods. Far be it from us to discourage such good intentions as these, but we regard it as our duty to remind such souls that if they would but strive to raise the standard of their supernatural life still higher by a close and permanent union with the Redeeming Christ their productivity would be enormously increased, and would secure an everlasting harvest!

Alas! what inconceivable mistakes, what failures, and what disappointments meet us in the sphere of the apostolate! Some apostolic workers have no room for anything but prayer; others depend on zeal alone, forgetting all too frequently that suffering must go in company with outward action and with contemplation. Further, it must not be imagined that the victim life is solely one of prayer and sacrifice, and therefore incompatible with apostolic zeal. This is an error which can scarcely be too strongly combated for the enlightenment of souls. Christ, in his Victim life, proved admirably that the elements of piety, of suffering, and zeal can be united. If we would grow in supernatural

fruitfulness we should do well to imitate him in the threefold aspect of his Victim life while careful to remain within the limits traced by our respective personal vocations.

For all such souls as these this essay has been undertaken. May they derive from it some supernatural benefit and understand more clearly that their calling as disciples of Christ should lead them to resemble their Divine Example in his Victim function!

And now, before we finally lay down our pen, we would declare our firm allegiance to the Holy See as well as to our Mother, Holy Church. The work which we have undertaken has been arduous and of a nature to discourage even the most learned and judicious, by reason of our subject's loftiness and all the difficulty of its problems. We have endeavoured to consider it with moderation, shunning alike a foolish rashness and an undue diffidence, either of which might lead us into error. But if there should be any censurable or defective passage in the book we reprobate it in advance—*errare humanum est*—abandoning our work to the unerring judgement of our Holy Mother Church, and ready to accept the criticisms of our more enlightened confrères.

Further, if that which we have written chance to do some good, we shall give thanks for it, to him whose hand has guided ours in the production of these pages, and also to those souls in whom he has permitted us to watch the admirable working of the Holy Spirit in their victim life. Happy indeed should we account ourselves if it were given us to rouse, were it but in a single heart, a deeper consciousness of Jesus Crucified, a greater passion for the Cross. . . .

Ended in Holy Week in the year of grace 1923.

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